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MEDITATIONS

AND

CONTEMPLATIONS.

CONTAINING

MEDITATIONS AMONG THE TOMBS;
REFLECTIONS ON A FLOWER-GARDEN;
AND, A DESCANT ON CREATION;
CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE NIGHT;
CONTEMPLATIONS ON THE STARRY HEAVENS;
AND,
A WINTER PIECE.

BY JAMES HERVEY, A.M.,
LATE RECTOR OF WESTON-FAVELL, IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

A NEW EDITION.

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THE

LIFE

OF THE

REV. JAMES HERVEY, A.M.

MR. HERVEY was born at Hardingstone, a village about a mile from Northampton, on February 26, 1713-14. His father was minister of the parish of Collingtree, within two miles of Hardingstone.

He received his early education at the free grammar-school of Northampton, where he attended for nearly ten years, learning the Latin and Greek languages; and would have made a much greater progress, if he had not been impeded by an odd whim of the master, who, it is said, would not suffer any of his boys to learn faster than his own son. At the age of seventeen he was entered of Lincoln-college, Oxford, and resided in the university about seven years, but without proceeding farther than his bachelor's degree. His time, however, was not mispent. Besides a very considerable stock of learning which he accumulated here, he imbibed those habits of regularity and principles of piety, which gave a colour to his future life and writings, and made him one of the most useful and popular preachers of his time.

His liberality and independence of mind began to appear while at Oxford, where he had a small exhibition of

twenty pounds a year. When his father, after he entered the church, urged him to take some curacy in or near Oxford, and to hold his exhibition, he would by no means comply, as he thought it unjust to detain it after he was in orders, from some other person who might want it to further his education. He then, in 1736, left Oxford, and became his father's curate, and afterwards went to London; but after a short stay, accepted the curacy of Dummer, in Hampshire. Here he continued about a year, until he was invited to Stoke Abbey in Devonshire, the seat of his worthy friend Paul Orchard, esq. with whom he lived upwards of two years. It was to this gentleman's son that he dedicated the second volume of his Meditations.

From 1738 to 1743 he resided either at Stoke Abbey, or at Biddeford; and during this period he planned, and probably wrote a considerable part of that very popular work which is now before the reader. An excursion to Kilkhampton in Cornwall, occasioned him to lay the scene of his Meditations among the Tombs in that church. In 1743 he returned to Weston-Favel, and officiated as curate to his father till the year 1750; when his health became so much impaired by his study and duty, that his friends conveyed him to London for change of air and scene. The purpose was not, however, answered; for he was seized in April 1752 with a severe illness which nearly proved fatal. On his recovery, and his father's death, which happened about the same time, he returned to Weston, where he constantly resided during the remainder of his life, having accepted the two livings of Weston-Favel and Collingtree.

His labours, both in the ministerial office and in his study, were pursued by him as long as possible; but his constitution, originally weak, and greatly injured by his

late illness, soon exhibited the usual symptoms and concomitants of rapid decay, attended with a hectic cough, which proved fatal on Christmas-day, 1758, in the forty-fourth year of his age. His death, throughout the district over which he extended his services, was deemed a public loss. By the poor it was felt to be so in every sense. In the exercise of his charity he was unbounded, but he was also judicious. He chose to clothe the poor rather than to give them money; and intrusted some friend to buy linen, coarse cloth, stockings, shoes, &c. for them at the best hand, alleging that the poor could not purchase on such good terms what they wanted at the little shops, and with small sums of money. But when money promised to be serviceable to a family distressed by sickness or misfortune, he would frequently give five or more guineas at a time, taking care that it should not be known whence the money came. It would be endless to enumerate the personal virtues of Mr. Hervey: he was the father, the instructor, the guide, and the friend of all to whom kindness or instruction was necessary. His piety was constant, ardent, and sincere: it appears in all his writings, but not in them more than in his life and conversation. He viewed every object of art or nature only as it made part of the great Creator's works, and was ever ready to give such a turn to common incidents or appearances, as might suggest some pious reflection or useful hint.

His learning was of the superior kind: Greek was almost as familiar to him as his native language. He was master of the classics, and in the younger part of his life had written some verses which showed no contemptible genius for poetry. His Meditations are, indeed, a species of poetical composition as far as respects imagery and fancy. He had, too, a critical knowledge of the Hebrew

tongue, and delighted in those studies which tend to explain the sacred text.

His writings are very numerous: they consist principally of the Meditations; Theron and Aspasio; a Collection of Letters; Sermons and Tracts; and some controversial pieces. By some he has been accounted a Calvinist, and by others supposed to lean to Antinomianism. But Calvinism, with superficial thinkers, is reproached, although it enters deeply into the principles of the Church of England; and as to Antinomianism, no man could be more free from it, or contend more earnestly for holiness of life, which he placed on what he thought its true foundation—not the poor and imperfect attempts of a variable and inconstant being, but the aid of power from on high.

Of all his works, none has enjoyed a more extensive and uninterrupted share of popularity, than his Meditations. They were first published in 1748, and have since gone through so many editions in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, that it is no longer possible to take account of them. It has always been one of the first books placed by serious parents in the hands of their children, because it unites the reflections of piety with much of the pleasures of imagination. Those glittering passages, which more mature critics object to, have been no inconsiderable means of guiding the taste in infancy; and some who have made a distinguished figure as writers, have acknowledged, that they owed not a little to the early perusal of Hervey's Meditations. Yet this with the author was but a secondary intention. That which lay nearest his heart, and what he has executed with most success, was to lead the young mind to serious reflection, and to render the visible objects of nature subservient to the honour and praise of the Creator.

VERSES TO MR. HERVEY,

ON HIS

MEDITATIONS.

IN these lov'd scenes what rapturous graces shine,
Live in each leaf, and breathe in every line!
What sacred beauties beam throughout the whole,
To charm the sense, and steal upon the soul!
In classic elegance, and thoughts—his own,
We see our faults, as in a mirror shown:
Each truth in glaring characters exprest,
All own the twin resemblance in their breast:
His easy periods, and persuasive page,
At once amend, and entertain the age:
Nature's wide fields all open to his view,
He charms the mind with something ever new:
On fancy's pinions his advent'rous soul
Wantons unbounded, and pervades the whole:
From death's dark caverns in the earth below,
To spheres, where planets roll, or comets glow.
See him explore, with more than human eyes,
The dreary sepulchre, where Granville lies:
Converse with stones, or monumental brass,
The rude inscriptions—or the painted glass:
To gloomy vaults descend with awful tread,
And view the silent mansions of the dead.
To gayer scenes he next adapts his lines,
Where lavish nature in embroidery shines:

The jess'mine groves, the woodbine's fragrant bow'rs,
With all the painted family of flow'rs:
There, Sacharissa! in each fleeting grace,
Read all the transient honours of thy face.
With equal dignity, now see him rise
To paint the sable horrors of the skies:
When all the wide horizon lies in shade;
And midnight phantoms sweep along the glade:
All nature hush'd—a solemn silence reigns,
And scarce a breeze disturbs the sleeping plains.
Last, yet not less, in majesty of phrase,
He draws the full-orb'd moon's expansive blaze;
The waving meteors, trembling from on high,
With all the mute artill'ry of the sky:
Systems on systems, which in order roll,
And dart their lambent beams from pole to pole.
Hail! mighty genius! whose excursive soul
No bounds confine, no limits can control:
Whose eye expatiates, and whose mind can rove,
Through earth, through æther, and the realms above:
From things inanimate can direct* the rod,
In just gradation to ascend to God.
Taught by thy lines, see hoary age grows wise,
And all the rebel in his bosom dies:
E'en thoughtless youth, in luxury of blood,
Fly the infectious world, and dare—be good:
Thy sacred truths shall reach th' impervious heart;
Discord shall cease, disease forget to smart;
E'en malice, love, and calumny commend;
Pride beg an alms, and av'rice turn a friend.
Centred in Christ, who fires the soul within,
The flesh shall know no pain; the soul, no sin:
E'en in the terrors of expiring breath,
We bless the friendly stroke, and live—in death.

Oxford, April 28, 1748.

* An allusion to the custom of shewing curious objects, and particularising their respective delicacies, by the pointing of a rod.

BY A PHYSICIAN.

CELESTIAL meditant! whose ardours rise,
Deep from the tombs, and kindle to the skies;
How shall an earthly bard's profaner string
Resound the flights of thy seraphic wing?
When great Elijah, in the fiery car,
Flam'd visible to heav'n, a living star,
A seer remain'd to thunder what he knew,
And with his mantle caught his spirit too.
Wit, fancy, fire, and elegance, have long
Been lost in vicious or ignoble song:
Sunk from the chastely grand, the pure sublime,
They flatter'd wealth and pow'r, or murder'd time.
'Tis thine their devious lustre to reduce,
To prove their noblest pow'r, their genuine use;
From earth-born fumes to clear their tainted flame,
And point their flight to heav'n—from whence they came
O more than bard in prose! to whom belong
Harmonious style and thought, in rhymeless song;
Oft, by thy friendly conduct, let me tread
The softly whispering mansions of the dead:
Where the grim form, calcining hinds and lords,
Grins at each fond distinction pride records.
Dumb, with immortal energy they teach;
Lifeless, they threaten, mould'ring as they preach
To each succeeding age, through ev'ry clime,
The span of life, and endless round of time:
Hence may propitious melancholy flow,
And safety find me in the vaults of woe.
While ev'ry virtue forms thy mental feast,
I glow with fair sincerity at least;
I feel (thy face unknown) thy heart refin'd,
And taste with bliss, the beauties of thy mind;
Collecting clearly, through thy sacred plan,
What reverence to God! what love to man!

O! when at last our deathless forms shall rise
And flow'rs and stars desist to moralize;
Shall then my soul by thine inform'd, survey,
And bear the splendours of essential day?
But while my thoughts indulge the glorious scope,
(My utmost worth beneath my humblest hope)
Conscience, or some exhorting angel, cries,
"No lazy wishes reach above the skies.
Would you indeed the perfect scenes survey,
And share the triumphs of unbounded day;
His love-diffusive life with ardour live;
And die like this divine contemplative."

London, July 9, 1748.

BY A PHYSICIAN.

To form the taste, and raise the nobler part,
To mend the morals, and to warm the heart;
To trace the genial source, we nature call,
And prove the God of nature friend of all;
Hervey for this his mental landscape drew,
And sketch'd the whole creation out to view.
Th' enamel'd bloom, and variegated flow'r,
Whose crimson changes with the changing hour;
The humble shrub, whose fragrance scents the morn,
With buds disclosing to the early dawn;
The oaks that grace Britannia's mountains side,
And spicy Lebanon's superior* pride;
All loudly sov'reign excellence proclaim,
And animated worlds confess the same.
The azure fields that form th' extended sky,
The planetary globes that roll on high,
And solar orbs, of proudest blaze, combine,
To act subservient to the great design,

* The Cedar.

Men, angels, seraphs, join the gen'ral voice;
And in the Lord of nature all rejoice.
  His, the grey Winter's venerable guise,
Its shrouded glories and instructive skies;*
His, the snow's plumes, that brood the sick'ning blade;
His, the bright pendant that impearls the glade,
The waving forest, or the whisp'ring brake,
The surging billow, or the sleeping lake.
The same, who pours the beauties of the spring,
Or mounts the whirlwind's desolating wing.
The same, who smiles in nature's peaceful form,
Frowns in the tempest, and directs the storm.
  'Tis thine, bright teacher, to improve the age;
'Tis thine, whose life's a comment on thy page.
Thy happy page! whose periods sweetly flow,
Whose figures charm us, and whose colours glow;
Where artless piety pervades the whole,
Refines the genius and exalts the soul.
For let the witling argue all he can,
It is religion still that makes the man.
'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis this, that wards the blow, or stills the smart;
Disarms affliction, or repels its dart;
Within the breast bids purest rapture rise;
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.
When the storm thickens, and the thunder rolls,
When the earth trembles to th' affrighted poles;
The virtuous mind, nor doubts nor fears assail;
For storms are zephyrs, or a gentler gale.
  And when disease obstructs the lab'ring breath,
When the heart sickens and each pulse is death;
E'en then religion shall sustain the just,
Grace their last moments, nor desert their dust.

August 5, 1748.

* Refering to the Winter-Piece.

As some new star attracts th' admiring sight,
His splendours pouring through the fields of light,
Whole nights, delighted with th' unusual rays,
On the fair heav'nly visitant we gaze:
So thy fam'd volumes sweet surprise impart;
Mark'd by all eyes, and felt in ev'ry heart.
Nature inform'd by thee, new paths has trod,
And rises here, a preacher for her God;
By fancy's aids mysterious heights she tries,
And lures us by our senses to the skies.
To deck thy style collected graces throng,
Bold as the pencil's tints, yet soft as song.
In themes, how rich thy vein! how pure thy choice;
Transcripts of truths, own'd clear from Scripture's voice:
Thy judgment these, and piety attest,
Transcripts—read only fairer in thy breast.
There, what thy works would show, we best may see,
And all they teach in doctrine, lives in thee.
  Oh!—might they live!—our prayers their strife engage;
But thy fix'd languors yield us sad presage.
In vain skill'd med'cine tries her healing art:
Disease, long foe, entrenches at thy heart.
Yet on new labours still thy mind is prone,
For a world's good too thoughtless of thy own.
Active, like day's kind orb, life's course you run,
Its sphere still glorious, though a setting sun.
Redemption opes thee wide her healing plan,
Health's only balm, her sov'reign'st gift to man.
Themes sweet like these thy ardours, fresh, excite:
Warm at the soul, they nerve thy hand to write;
Make thy try'd virtues in their charms appear,
Patience, rais'd hope, firm faith, and love sincere,
Like a big constellation, bright they glow,
And beam out lovelier by thy night of woe.
  Known were thy merits to the public long,
Ere own'd thus feebly in my humble song.

Damp'd are my fires: my heart dark cares depress;
A heart too feeling from its own distress.
Proud on thy friendship, yet to build my fame,
I gain'd my page* a sanction from thy name;
Weak these returns (by gratitude though led)
Where mine shall in thy fav'rite leaves be read.
Yet, o'er my conscious meanness hope prevails;
Love gives me merit where my genius fails.
On its strong base my small desert I raise,
Averse to flatt'ry, as unskill'd to praise.

MOSES BROWNE.

Mile-End Green,
Feb. 23, 1749.

WHENCE flow these solemn sounds? this rapturous strain?
Cherubic notes my wond'ring ear detain!
Yet 'tis a mortal's voice: 'tis Hervey sings:
Sublime he soars on Contemplation's wings:
In ev'ry period breathes ecstatic thought.
Hervey, 'twas heav'n thy sacred lessons taught.
Celestial visions bless thy studious hours,
Thy lonely walks, and thy sequester'd bow'rs.
What fav'ring power, dispensing secret aids
Thy cavern'd cell, thy curtain'd couch pervades?
Still hov'ring near observant of thy themes,
In whispers prompts thee, or inspires thy dreams.
Jesus! effulgence of paternal light!
Ineffably divine! supremely bright!
Whose energy according worlds attest,
Kindled these ardours in thy glowing breast.
We catch thy flame, as we thy page peruse;
And faith in every object Jesus views.
We in the blooming breathing garden trace
Somewhat—like emanations of his grace:

* Sunday Thoughts.

Yet must all sweetness and all beauty yield,
Idume's grove, and Sharon's flow'ry field,
Compar'd with Jesus; meanly, meanly shows
The brightest lily, faint the loveliest rose.
Divine instructor! lead through midnight glooms,
To moralizing stars, and preaching tombs;
Through the still void a Saviour's voice shall break,
A ray from Jacob's star the darkness streak:
To him the fairest scenes their lustre owe;
His cov'nant brightens the celestial bow;
His vast benevolence profusely spreads
The yellow harvests, and the verdant meads.
Thy pupil, Hervey, a Redeemer finds
In boundless oceans, and in viewless winds:
He reigns at will the furious blast, and guides
The rending tempests, and the roaring tides.
O give, my soul, thy welfare to his trust:
Who rais'd the world, can raise thy sleeping dust!
He will, He will, when nature's course is run,
Midst falling stars, and an extinguish'd sun:
He will with myriads of his saints appear.
O may I join them, though the meanest there!
Though nearer to the throne my Hervey sings;
Though I at humbler distance strike the strings;
Yet both shall mingle in the same employ,
Both drink the fulness of eternal joy.

JOHN DUICK.

Clerkenwell-Green,
Feb. 24, 1749-50.

WHAT numbers of our race survey
The monarch of the golden day,
Night's ample canopy unfurl'd,
In gloomy grandeur round the world,
The earth in Spring's embroid'ry drest,
And ocean's ever-working breast!

And still no grateful honours rise
To Him who spreads the spacious skies,
Who hung this air-suspended ball,
And lives, and reigns, and shines, in all!
  To chase our sensual fogs away,
And bright to pour th' eternal ray
Of deity inscrib'd around
Wide nature to her utmost bound,
Is Hervey's task; and well his skill
Celestial can the task fulfil:
Ascending from these scenes below,
Ardent the Maker's praise to show,
His sacred contemplations soar,
And teach our wonder to adore.
  Now he surveys the realms beneath,
The realms of horror and of death;
Now entertains his vernal hours
In flow'ry walks, and blooming bow'rs;
Now hails the black-brow'd night, that brings
Æthereal dews upon her wings;
Now marks the planets, as they roll
On burning axles round the pole:
While tombs, and flow'rs, and shades, and stars,
Unveil their sacred characters
Of justice, wisdom, pow'r and love;
And lift the soul to realms above,
Where dwells the God, in glory crown'd,
Who sends his boundless influence round.
  So Jacob, in his blissful dreams,
Array'd in heav'n's refulgent beams,
Saw from the ground a scale arise,
Whose summit mingled with the skies:
Angels were pleas'd to pass the road,
The stage to earth, and path to God.
  Hervey, proceed; for nature yields
Fresh treasure in her ample fields,

And in seraphic ecstacy,
Still bear us to the throne on high.
Ocean's wild wonders next explore,
His changing scenes, and secret store;
Or let dire earthquake claim thy toil,
Earthquake, that shakes a guilty isle.
So, if small things may shadow forth,
Dear man, thy labours, and thy worth,
The bee upon the flow'ry lawn
Imbibes the lucid drops of dawn,
Works them in his mysterious mould,
And turns the common dew to gold.

THOMAS GIBBONS.

London,
May 26, 1750.

DELIGHTFUL author whom the saints inspire,
And whisp'ring angels with their ardours fire!
From youth like mine, wilt thou accept of praise?
Or smile with candour on a stripling's lays?
My little laurel (but a shoot at most)
Has hardly more than one small wreath to boast.
Such as it is—(Ah! might it worthier be!)
Its scanty foliage all is due to thee.
Oh! if amongst the honours of thy brow
This slender circlet may but humbly grow:
If its faint verdure haply may find place—
A foil to others;—though its own disgrace;
Accept it Hervey, from a heart sincere,
And, for the giver's sake,—the tribute wear.
Thy soul-improving works perus'd, what tongue
Can hold from praise, or check th' applausive song?
But ah! from whence shall gratitude obtain
Language that may its glowing zeal explain?
How to such wond'rous worth adapt a strain?

Describ'd by thee, cold sepulchres can charm;
Storms, calm the soul; and freezing winter warm.
Clear'd from her gloomy shades, we view pale night
Surrounded with a blaze of mental light.
Lo! where she comes, all silent, pensive, slow,
On her dark robe unnumber'd meteors glow;
High on her head a starry crown she wears;
Bright in her hand the lamp of reason bears;
Smiling,—behold! she points the soul to heav'n,
And bids the weeping sinner be forgiv'n!
But when thy fancy shifts the solemn scene,
And ruddy morning gilds the cheerful green;
With sudden joy we view the prospect chang'd,
And blushing sweets in beauteous order rang'd;
We see the violets, smell the dewy rose,
And each perfume that from the woodbine flows;
A boundless perspective there greets our eyes:
Rich vales descend, and verdant mountains rise.
The shepherd's cottages, the rural folds;
All that thy art describes, the eye beholds:
Amazing limner! whence this matchless pow'r?
Thy work's a garden,—ev'ry word, a flow'r:
Thy lovely tints almost the bloom excel,
And none but Nature's self can paint so well.
Hail, holy man!—henceforth thy work shall stand
(Like some fair column by a master-hand,
Which, whilst it props, adorns the tow'ring pile)
At once to grace and elevate our isle.
Though simple, lofty; though majestic, plain;
Whose bold design the rules of art restrain,
In which the nicest eye sees nothing wrong:
Though polish'd, just; and elegant, though strong.

ST. GEORGE MOLESWORTH.

July 24, 1750.

In Pleasure's lap the muses long have lain,
And hung, attentive, on her siren strain:
Still toils the bard beneath some weak design,
And puny thought but halts along the line;
Of tuneful nothings, stealing on the mind,
Melt into air, nor leave a trace behind.
While to thy rapt'rous prose, we feel, belong
The strength of wisdom, and the voice of song;
This lifts the torch of sacred truth on high,
And points the captives to their native sky.
How false the joys, which earth or sense inspires,
That clog the soul, and damp her purer fires;
Truths, which thy solemn scenes, my friend, declare,
Whose glowing colours paint us as we are.
Yet not morosely stern, nor idly gay,
Dull melancholy reigns, or trifles sway:
Ill would the strains of levity befit,
And sullen gloom but sadden all thy wit:
Truth, judgment, sense, imagination join;
And ev'ry muse, and ev'ry grace is thine.
Religion prompting the true end of man,
Conspiring genius executes the plan;
Strong to convince and elegant to charm,
Plaintive to melt or passionate to warm.
Rais'd by degress, we elevate our aim,
And grow immortal as we catch thy flame;
True piety informs our languid hearts,
And all the vicious, and the vain departs.
So when foul spreading fogs creep slowly on,
Blot the fair morn, and hide the golden sun;
Ardent he pours the boundless blaze of day,
Rides through the sky, and shines the mist away.
O, had it been the Almighty's gracious will,
That I had shar'd a portion of thy skill;

Had this poor breast receiv'd the heav'nly beam
Which spreads its lustre through thy various theme;
That speaks deep lessons from the silent tomb,
And crowns thy garden with fresh springing bloom;
Or piercing through creation's ample whole,
Now sooths the night, or gilds the starry pole;
Or marks how Winter calls her howling train,
Her snows and storms, that desolate the plain;
With thee the muse should trace the pleasing road,
That leads from nature up to nature's God;
Humble to learn, and, as she knows the more,
Glad to obey, and happy to adore.

PETER WHALLEY.

Northampton,
August 25, 1750.

TO

MISS R——— T———.

MADAM,

THESE reflections, the one on the deepest, the other on the gayest scenes of nature, when they proceeded privately from the pen, were addressed to a lady of the most valuable endowments; who crowned all her other endearing qualities by a fervent love of Christ, and an exemplary conformity to his divine pattern. She, alas! lives no longer on earth; unless it be in the honours of a distinguished character, and in the bleeding remembrance of her acquaintance.

It is impossible, Madam, to wish you a richer blessing, or a more substantial happiness, than that the same spirit of unfeigned faith, the same course of undefiled religion, which have enabled her to triumph over death, may both animate and adorn your life. And you will permit me to declare that my chief inducement in requesting your acceptance of the following Meditations, now they make a public appearance from the press is, that they are designed to cultivate the same sacred principle, and to promote the same excellent practice.

Long, Madam, may you bloom in all the vivacity and amiableness of youth, like the charming subject of one of these Contemplations. But at the same time remember, that with regard to such inferior accomplishments, you

must one day fade, (may it prove some very remote period!) like the mournful objects of the other. This consideration will prompt you to go on as you have begun, in adding the meekness of wisdom, and all the beauties of holiness, to the graces of an engaging person, and the refinements of a polite education.

And might—O! might the ensuing hints furnish you with the least assistance in prosecuting so desirable an end; might they contribute in any degree to establish your faith, or elevate your devotion, they would then administer to the author such a satisfaction as applause cannot give, nor censure take away; a satisfaction, which I should be able to enjoy, even in those awful moments, when all that captivates the eye is sinking in darkness, and every glory of this lower world disappearing for ever.

These wishes, Madam, as they are a most agreeable employ of my thoughts, so they come attended with this additional circumstance of pleasure, that they are also the sincerest expression of that very great esteem, with which I am,

Madam,

Your most obedient,

Most humble servant,

JAMES HERVEY

Weston-Favell, near Northampton,
May 20, 1746.

PREFACE.

THE first of these occasional Meditations begs leave to remind my readers of their latter end; and would invite them to set, not their houses only, but, which is inexpressibly more needful, their souls in order: that they may be able, through all the intermediate stages to look forward upon their approaching exit without any anxious apprehensions; and when the great change commences, may bid adieu to terrestrial things, with all the calmness of a cheerful resignation, with all the comforts of a well-grounded faith.

The other attempts to sketch out some little traces of the all-sufficiency of our Redeemer, for the grand and gracious purposes of everlasting salvation. That a sense of his unutterable dignity, and infinite perfections, may incite us to regard Him with sentiments of the most profound veneration; to long for an assured interest in his merits, with all the ardency of desire, and to trust in his powerful mediation, with an affiance not to be shaken by any temptations, not to be shared with any performances of our own.

I flatter myself that the thoughts conceived among the tombs may be welcome to the serious and humane mind; because, as there are few who have not consigned the remains of some dear relations or honoured friends to those silent repositories, so there are none but must be sensible, that this is the house appointed for all living; and that they themselves are shortly to remove into the

same solemn mansions.—And who would not turn aside for awhile from the most favourite amusements to view the place where his once loved companions lie? Who would not sometimes survey those apartments where he himself is to take up an abode till time shall be no more?

As to the other little essay, may I not humbly presume that the very subject itself will recommend the remarks? For who is not delighted with the prospect of the blooming creation, and even charmed with the delicate attractions of flowers? who does not covet to assemble them in the garden, or wear them in a nosegay? Since this is a passion so universal, who would not be willing to render it productive of the sublimest improvement?—This piece of holy frugality, I have ventured to suggest, and endeavoured to exemplify in the second letter; that while the hand is cropping the transient beauties of a flower, the attentive mind may be enriching itself with solid and lasting good. And I cannot but entertain some pleasing hopes, that the nicest taste may receive and relish religious impressions, when they are conveyed by such lovely monitors; when the instructive lessons are found, not on the leaves of some formidable folio, but stand legible on the fine sarcenet of a narcissus; when they savour not of the lamp and recluse, but come breathing from the fragrant bosom of a jonquil.

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MEDITATIONS

AMONG

THE TOMBS.

Every stone that we look upon in this repository of past age is both an entertainment and a monitor.

Plain-Dealer, Vol. I. No. 42.

MEDITATIONS

AMONG

THE TOMBS.

IN A LETTER TO A LADY.

MADAM,

TRAVELLING lately into Cornwall, I happened to alight at a considerable village in that county; where, finding myself under an unexpected necessity of staying a little, I took a walk to the church.* The doors, like the heaven to which they lead, were wide open, and readily admitted an unworthy stranger. Pleased with the opportunity, I resolved to spend a few minutes under the sacred roof.

In a situation so retired and awful, I could not avoid falling into a train of meditations, serious and mournfully pleasing; which, I trust, were in some degree profitable to me, while they possessed and warmed my thoughts; and if they may administer any satisfaction to you, Madam, now they are recollected and committed to writing, I shall receive a fresh pleasure from them.

It was an ancient pile, reared by hands, that, ages ago, were mouldered into dust; situate in the centre of a large burial-ground, remote from all the noise and hurry of tumultuous life: the body spacious, the

* I had named, in some former editions, a particular church, viz. Kilkhampton, where several of the monuments, described in the following pages, really exist. But as I thought it convenient to mention some cases here, which are not, according to the best of my remembrance, referred to in any inscriptions there, I have now omitted the name; that imagination might operate more freely, and the improvement of the reader be consulted, without any thing that should look like a variation from truth and fact.

structure lofty, the whole magnificently plain: a row of regular pillars extended themselves through the midst, supporting the roof with simplicity and with dignity. The light that passed through the windows seemed to shed a kind of luminous obscurity, which gave every object a grave and venerable air. The deep silence, added to the gloomy aspect, and both heightened by the loneliness of the place, greatly increased the solemnity of the scene. A sort of religious dread stole insensibly on my mind, while I advanced, all pensive and thoughtful, along the inmost isle—such a dread, as hushed every ruder passion, and dissipated all the gay images of an alluring world.

Having adored that Eternal Majesty, who, far from being confined to temples made with hands, has heaven for his throne, and the earth for his footstool, I took particular notice of a handsome altar-piece, presented, as I was afterwards informed, by the master-builders of Stow,* out of gratitude, I presume, to that gracious God who carried them through their work, and enabled them to "bring forth their top-stone with joy."

Oh! how amiable is gratitude! especially when it has the supreme Benefactor for its object. I have always looked upon gratitude as the most exalted principle that can actuate the heart of man. It has something noble, disinterested, and (if I may be allowed the term) generously devout. Repentance indicates our nature fallen, and prayer turns chiefly upon a regard to one's self. But the exercises of gratitude subsisted in paradise, when there was no fault to deplore; and will be perpetuated in heaven, when "God shall be all in all."

The language of this sweet temper is, "I am unspeakably obliged: What return shall I make?" And surely it is no improper expression of an unfeigned

* The name of a grand seat belonging to the late Earl of Bath; remarkable, formerly, for its excellent workmanship and elegant furniture; once the principal resort of the quality and gentry of the west, but now demolished, laid even with the ground, and scarce one stone left upon another;—so that corn may grow, or nettles spring, where Stow lately stood.

thankfulness, to decorate our Creator's courts, and beautify "the place where his honour dwelleth." Of old, the habitation of his feet was glorious; let it not now be sordid or contemptible. It must grieve an ingenuous mind, and be a reproach to any people, to have their own houses wainscoted with cedar, and painted with vermilion, while the temple of the Lord of Hosts is destitute of every decent ornament.

Here I recollected, and was charmed with Solomon's fine address to the Almighty, at the dedication of his famous temple. With immense charge and exquisite skill he had erected the most rich and finished structure that the sun ever saw: Yet, upon a review of his work, and a reflection on the transcendent perfections of the Godhead, how he exalts the one and abases the other! The building was too glorious for the mightiest monarch to inhabit; too sacred for unhallowed feet even to enter, yet infinitely too mean for the Deity to reside in. It was, and the royal worshipper acknowledged it to be, a most marvellous vouchsafement in uncreated excellency, to "put his name there." The whole passage breathes such a delicacy, and is animated with such a sublimity of sentiment, that I cannot persuade myself to pass on without repeating it:—"But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold! the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less his house that I have builded!"*—Incomparable saying! worthy the wisest of men. Who would not choose to possess such an elevated devotion, rather

* 1 Kings viii. 27.—*But will!* A fine abrupt beginning, most significantly describing the amazement and rapture of the royal prophet's mind!—*God:* He uses no epithet, where writers of inferior discernment would have been fond to multiply them; but speaks of the Deity as an incomprehensible being, whose perfections and glories are exalted above all praise.—*Dwell:* To bestow on sinful creatures a propitious look, to favour them with a transient visit of kindness; even this were an unutterable obligation. Will he then vouchsafe to fix his abode among them, and take up his stated residence with them?—*Indeed:* A word, in this connexion, peculiarly emphatical, expressive of a condescension, wonderful and extraordinary, almost beyond all credibility.—*Behold!* Intimating the continued or rather the increasing surprise of the speaker, and awakening the attention of the hearer.—*Behold! the heaven:* The spacious concave of the firmament; that

than to own all the glittering materials of that sumptuous edifice?

We are apt to be struck with admiration at the stateliness and grandeur of a masterly performance in architecture; and, perhaps, on a sight of the ancient sanctuary, should have made the superficial observation of the disciples—"What manner of stones, and what buildings are here!" But what a nobler turn of thought, and juster taste of things does it discover, to join with Israel's king, in celebrating the condescension of the divine Inhabitant! That the High and Lofty One, who fills immensity with his glory, should, in a peculiar manner, fix his abode there! Should there manifest an extraordinary degree of his benedictive presence; permit sinful mortals to approach his majesty, and promise "to make them joyful in his house of prayer!"—This should more sensibly affect our hearts, than the most curious arrangement of stones can delight our eyes.

Nay, the everlasting God does not disdain to dwell in our souls by his holy spirit; and to make even our bodies his temple.—Tell me, ye that frame critical judgments, and balance nicely the distinction of things; "Is this most astonishing, or most rejoicing?—He humbleth himself, the Scripture assures us, even to behold the things that are in heaven.* 'Tis a most condescending favour, if he pleases to take the least approving notice of angels and archangels, when they bow down in homage from their celestial thrones. Will he then graciously regard, will he be united, most intimately united to poor, polluted breathing dust?

wide extended azure circumference, in which worlds unnumbered perform their revolutions, is too scanty an apartment for the Godhead. Nay, *The heaven of heavens:* Those vastly higher tracts which lie far beyond the limits of human survey, to which our very thoughts can hardly soar; even these (unbounded as they are) cannot afford an adequate habitation for Jehovah; even these dwindle into a point, when compared with the infinitude of his essence; even these "are as nothing before Him." How much less proportionate is this poor diminutive speck (which I have been erecting and embellishing), to so august a presence, so immense a majesty!

* Psal. cxiii. 6.

Unparalleled honour! invaluable privilege! Be this my portion, and I shall not covet crowns, nor envy conquerors.

But let me remember, what a sanctity of disposition and uprightness of conversation, so exalted a relation demands: Remember this, "and rejoice with trembling." Durst I commit any iniquity, while I tread these hallowed courts? Could the Jewish high priest allow himself in any known transgression, while he made that solemn yearly entrance* into the holy of holies, and stood before the immediate presence of Jehovah? No, truly. In such circumstances, a thinking person must shudder at the most remote solicitation, to any wilful offence. I should now be shocked at the least indecency of behaviour, and am apprehensive of every appearance of evil. And why do we not carry this holy jealousy into all our ordinary life? Why do we not, in every place,† reverence ourselves, as persons dedicated to the Divinity, as living temples of the Godhead? For, if we are real, and not merely nominal Christians, the God of glory, according to his own promise,‡ dwells in us, and walks in us.—O! that this one doctrine of our religion might operate, with an abiding efficacy, upon our consciences! It would be instead of a thousand laws, to regulate our conduct; instead of a thousand motives, to quicken us in holiness. Under the influence of such a conviction, we should study to maintain a purity of intention; a dignity of action; and to walk worthy of that transcendently majestic Being, who admits us to a fellowship with himself, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

* Heb. ix. 7.

† ——— σεαυτὸν δὲ μαλιστ' αἰσχύνου σεαυτόν, was the favourite maxim of Pythagoras, and supposed to be one of the best moral precepts ever given to the heathen world. With what superior force, and very singular advantage, does this argument take place in the Christian scheme! Where we are taught to regard ourselves, not merely as intellectual beings, who have reason for our monitor; but as consecrated creatures, who have a God of the most consummate perfection, ever with us, ever in us.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

The next thing, which engaged my attention, was the lettered floor. The pavement, somewhat like Ezekiel's roll, was written over from one end to the other. I soon perceived the comparison to hold good in another respect, and the inscriptions to be matter of "Mourning, lamentation, and woe!*" They seemed to court my observation; silently inviting me to read them. And what would these dumb monitors inform me of?—"That, beneath their little circumferences, were deposited such and such pieces of clay, which once lived, and moved, and talked: that they had received a charge to preserve their names, and were the remaining trustees of their memory."

Ah! said I, is such my situation! The adorable Creator around me, and the bones of my fellow-creatures under me! Surely then, I have great reason to cry out with the revering patriarch, How dreadful is this place!† Seriousness and devotion become this house for ever. May I never enter it lightly or irreverently; but with a profound awe, and godly fear!

O! that they were wise!‡ said the inspired penman. It was his last wish for his dear people: He breathed it out, and gave up the ghost. But what is wisdom? It consists not in refined speculations, accurate researches into nature; or an universal acquaintance with history. The divine lawgiver settles this important point, in his next aspiration: O! that they understood this! that they had right apprehensions of their spiritual interest, and eternal concerns! that they had eyes to discern, and inclinations to pursue the things which belong to their peace! But how shall they attain this valuable knowledge? I send them not, adds the illustrious teacher, to turn over all the volumes of literature: They may acquire, and much more expeditiously, this science of life, by considering their latter end. This spark of heaven is often lost, under the glitter of pompous erudition; but shines clearly, in the gloomy mansions of the tomb: drowned in this

* Ezek. ii. 10. † Gen. xxviii. 17. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 29.

gentle whisper, amidst the noise of secular affairs; but speaks distinctly, in the retirement of serious contemplation. Behold! how providentially I am brought to the school of wisdom!* The grave is the most faithful master;† and these instances of mortality, the most instructive lessons. Come then, calm attention, and compose my thoughts! come, thou celestial spirit, and enlighten my mind! that I may so peruse these awful pages, as to become "wise unto Salvation."

Examining the records of mortality, I found the memorials of a promiscuous multitude:‡ they were huddled, at least they rested together, without any regard to rank or seniority; none were ambitious of the uppermost rooms, or chief seats, in this house of mourning: none entertained fond and eager expectations of being honourably greeted, in their darksome cells. The man of years and experience, reputed as an oracle in his generation, was content to lie down at the feet of a babe. In this house, appointed for all living, the servant was equally accommodated and lodged in the same story with his master. The poor indigent lay as softly, and slept as soundly, as the most opulent possessor. All the distinction that subsisted, was a grassy hillock, bound with osiers, or a sepulchral stone, ornamented with imagery.

Why then, said my working thoughts, O! why should we raise such a mighty stir about superiority and precedence, when the next remove will reduce us all to a state of equal meanness? Why should we exalt ourselves, or debase others, since we must all, one day, be upon a common level, and blended together, in the same undistinguished dust? O! that this consideration might humble my own, and others' pride, and sink

* The man how wise, who, sick of gaudy scenes,
Is led by choice to take his fav'rite walk
Beneath Death's gloomy, silent, cypress shades,
Unpierc'd by Vanity's fantastic ray!
To read his monuments, to weigh his dust,
Visit his vaults, and dwell among the tombs!—*Night Thoughts.*

† Wait the great teacher Death.—*Pope.*

‡ Mista senum ac juvenum densantur funera.—*Hor*

our imagination as low as our habitations will shortly be!

Among these confused relics of humanity, there are, without doubt, persons of contrary interests, and contradicting sentiments. But Death, like some able daysman, has laid his hand on the contending parties, and brought all their differences to an amicable conclusion.* Here enemies, sworn enemies, dwell together in unity; they drop every imbittered thought, and forget that they once were foes; perhaps their crumbling bones mix as they moulder; and those who, while they lived, stood aloof in irreconcilable variance, here fall into mutual embraces, and even incorporate with each other in the grave.—O! that we might learn from these friendly ashes, not to perpetuate the memory of injuries, not to foment the fever of resentment, nor cherish the turbulence of passion. That there may be as little animosity and disagreement in the land of the living, as there is in the congregation of the dead! But I suspend for a while such general observations, and address myself to a more particular inquiry.

Yonder white stone, emblem of the innocence it covers, informs the beholder of one, who breathed out its tender soul, almost in the instant of receiving it. There, the peaceful infant, without so much as knowing what labour and vexation mean,† "lies still and is quiet; it sleeps and is at rest." Staying only to wash away its native impurity in the laver of regeneration, it bid a speedy adieu to time, and terrestrial things. What did the little hasty sojourner find, so forbidding and disgustful in our upper world, to occasion its precipitant exit! 'Tis written, indeed, of its suffering Saviour, that when he had tasted the vinegar mingled with gall, he would not drink.‡ And did our new-come stranger begin to sip the cup of life; but, perceiving the bitterness, turn away its head, and refuse the draught?

* Hi motus animorum atque hæc certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescent. *Virg.*

† Job iii. 13. ‡ Matt. xxvii. 34.

Was this the cause, why the wary babe only opened its eyes, just looked on the light, and then withdrew, into the more inviting regions of undisturbed repose?

Happy voyager! no sooner launched, than arrived at the haven!* but more eminently happy they, who have passed the waves, and weathered all the storms of a troublesome and dangerous world! who, "through many tribulations, have entered into the kingdom of heaven; and thereby brought honour to their divine convoy, administered comfort to the companions of their toil, and left an instructive example to succeeding pilgrims.

Highly favoured probationer! accepted, without being exercised!—It was thy peculiar privilege, not to feel the slightest of those evils, which oppress thy surviving kindred; which frequently fetch groans from the most manly fortitude, or most elevated faith. The arrows of calamity, barbed with anguish, are often fixed deep in our choicest comforts.—The fiery darts of temptation, shot from the hand of hell, are always flying in showers around our integrity. To thee, sweet babe, both these distresses and dangers are alike unknown.

Consider this, ye mourning parents, and dry up your tears. Why should you lament that your little ones are crowned with victory, before the sword is drawn, or the conflict begun?—Perhaps the Supreme Disposer of events foresaw some inevitable snare of temptation forming, or some dreadful storm of adversity impending: And why should you be so dissatisfied, with that kind precaution, which housed your pleasant plant, and removed into shelter a tender flower, before the thunders roared; before the lightnings flew; before the tempest poured its rage?—O remember! they are not lost, but taken away from the evil to come.†

* Happy the babe, who, privileg'd by fate
To shorter labour and a lighter weight,
Receiv'd but yesterday the gift of breath
Order'd to morrow to return to Death *Prior's Sol.*

† Isa. lvii. 1.

At the same time, let survivors, doomed to bear the heat and burden of the day, for their encouragement reflect—That it is more honourable to have entered the lists, and to have fought the good fight, before they come off conquerors. They who have borne the cross, and submitted to afflictive providences, with a cheerful resignation; have girded up the loins of their mind, and performed their Master's will, with an honest and persevering fidelity;—these, having glorified their Redeemer on earth, will, probably, be as stars of the first magnitude in heaven. They will shine with brighter beams, be replenished with stronger joys, in their Lord's everlasting kingdom.

Here lies the grief of a fond mother, and the blasted expectation of an indulgent father.—The youth grew up, like a well-watered plant; he shot deep, rose high, and bid fair for manhood. But just as the cedar began to tower, and promised, ere long, to be the pride of the wood, and prince among the neighbouring trees—Behold! the axe is laid unto the root; the fatal blow struck; and all its branching honours tumbled to the dust.—And did he fall alone? No, the hopes of his father that begat him, and the pleasing prospects of her that bare him, fell, and were crushed together with him.

Doubtless, it would have pierced one's heart, to have beheld the tender parents, following the breathless youth to his long home. Perhaps, drowned in tears, and all overwhelmed with sorrows, they stood, like weeping statues, on this very spot.—Methinks, I see the deeply-distressed mourners attending the sad solemnity. How they wring their hands, and pour floods from their eyes!—Is it fancy? or do I really hear the passionate mother, in an agony of affliction, taking her final leave of the darling of her soul? Dumb she remained, while the awful obsequies were performing; dumb with grief, and leaning upon the partner of her woes. But now the inward anguish struggles for vent; it grows too big to be repressed. She advances to the

brink of the grave; all her soul is in her eyes; she fastens one more look upon the dear doleful object, before the pit shuts its mouth upon him. And as she looks, she cries;—in broken accents, interrupted by many a rising sob, she cries—"Farewell, my son! my son! my only beloved! Would to God I had died for thee!—Farewell, my child; and farewell all my earthly happiness!—I shall never more see good, in the land of the living.—Attempt not to comfort me.—I will go mourning, all my days, till my gray hairs come down with sorrow to the grave."

From this affecting representation, let parents be convinced, how highly it concerns them to cultivate the morals, and secure the immortal interests of their children.—If you really love the offspring of your own bodies; if your bowels yearn over those amiable pledges of conjugal endearment; spare no pains, give all diligence, I entreat you, to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:" then may you have joy in their life, or consolation in their death. If their span is prolonged; their unblamable and useful conduct, will be the staff of your age, and a balm for declining nature. Or, if the number of their years be cut off in the midst; you may commit their remains to the dust, with much the same comfortable expectations as you send the survivors to places of genteel education. You may commit them to the dust, with cheering hopes of receiving them again to your arms, inexpressibly improved in every noble and endearing accomplishment.

'Tis certainly a severe trial, and much more afflictive than I am able to imagine, to resign a lovely blooming creature, sprung from your own loins, to the gloomy recesses of corruption. Thus to resign him, after having been long dandled upon your knees; united to your affections by a thousand ties of tenderness; and now become both the delight of your eyes, and the support of your family!—To have such a one torn from your bosom, and thrown into darkness,

doubtless, it must be like a dagger in your hearts.—But O! how much more cutting to you, and confounding to the child, to have the soul separated from God; and, for shameful ignorance, or early impiety, transmitted to places of eternal torment! How would it aggravate your distress, and add a distracting emphasis to all your sighs, if you should follow the pale corpse with these bitter reflections!—"This dear creature, though long ago capable of knowing good from evil, is gone out of the world, before it had learned the great design of coming into it. A short-lived momentary existence, it received from me; but no good instructions, no holy admonitions; nothing to further its well-being in that everlasting state, upon which it is now entered. The poor body is consigned to the coffin, and carried out to consume away, in the cold and silent grave. And what reason have I to suppose, that the precious soul is in a better condition? May I not justly fear, that, sentenced by the righteous Judge, it is going, or gone away, into the pains of endless punishment?—Perhaps, while I am bewailing its untimely departure, it may be cursing, in outer darkness, that ever-to-be deplored, that most calamitous day, when it was born of such a careless, ungodly parent, as I have been."

Nothing, I think, but the gnawings of that worm which never dies, can equal the anguish of these self-condemning thoughts. The tortures of a rack must be an easy suffering, compared with the stings and horrors of such a remorse.—How earnestly do I wish, that as many as are intrusted with the management of children, would take timely care to prevent these scourges of conscience; by endeavouring to conduct their minds into an early knowledge of Christ, and a cordial love of his truth!

On this hand is lodged one, whose sepulchral stone tells a most pitiable tale indeed! Well may the little images, reclined over the sleeping ashes, hang down their heads with that pensive air! None can consider so mournful a story, without feeling some touches of

sympathizing concern.—His age twenty-eight; his death sudden; himself cut down in the prime of life, amidst all the vivacity and vigour of manhood; while "his breasts were full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow."—Probably he entertained no apprehensions of the evil hour; and indeed who could have suspected, that so bright a sun should go down at noon? To human appearance, his hill stood strong. Length of days seemed written in his sanguine countenance; he solaced himself with the prospect of a long, long series of earthly satisfactions.—When, lo! an unexpected stroke descends! descends from that mighty arm, which "overturneth the mountains by their roots; and crushes the imaginary hero, before the moth;"* as quickly and more easily, than our fingers press such a feeble fluttering insect to death.

Perhaps, the nuptial joys were all he thought on.—Were not such the breathings of his enamoured soul? "Yet a very little while, and I shall possess the utmost of my wishes; I shall call my charmer mine; and, in her, enjoy whatever my heart can crave."—In the midst of such enchanting views, had some faithful friend, but softly reminded him of an opening grave, and the end of all things; how unseasonable would he have reckoned the admonition? Yet, though all warm with life, and rich in visionary bliss, he was even then tottering upon the brink of both.—Dreadful vicissitude! to have the bridal festivity† turned into the funeral

* Job iv. 19. לפני עש—Ad instar, ad modum, tineæ.—I retain this interpretation, both as it is most suitable to my purpose, and as it is patronized by some eminent commentators; especially the celebrated Schultens. Though I cannot but give the preference to the opinion of a judicious friend, who would render the passage more literally, 'Before the face of a moth:' making it to represent a creature so exceedingly frail, that even a moth, flying against it, may dash it to pieces; which, besides its closer correspondence with the exact import of the Hebrew, presents us with a much finer image of the most extreme imbecility. For it certainly implies a far greater degree of weakness, to be crushed by the feeble flutter of the feeblest creature, than only to be crushed as easily as that creature, by the hand of man. The French version is very expressive and beautiful; à la rencontre d'un vermisseau.

† A distress of this kind is painted in very affecting colours by Pliny, in an epistle to Marcellinus; O triste planè acerbumque funus!

solemnity! Deplorable misfortune! to be shipwrecked in the very haven! and to perish even in sight of happiness!—What a memorable proof is here of the frailty of man, in his best estate! Look, O! look on this monument, ye gay and careless! Attend to this date, and boast no more of to-morrow!

Who can tell, but the bride-maids, girded with gladness, had prepared the marriage-bed? had decked it with the richest covers, and dressed it in pillows of down? When—Oh! trust not in youth, or strength, or in any thing mortal; for there is nothing certain, nothing to be depended on, beneath the unchangeable God—Death, relentless Death, is making him another kind of bed in the dust of the earth. Unto this he must be conveyed, not with a splendid procession of joyous attendants; but stretched in the gloomy hearse, and followed by a train of mourners. On this he must take up a lonely lodging, nor ever be released, "till the heavens are no more."—In vain does the consenting fair-one put on her ornaments and expect her spouse. Did she not, like Sisera's mother, look out of the lattice; chide the delays of her beloved, and wonder "why his chariot was so long in coming?" little thinking, that the intended bridegroom had for ever done with transitory things! that now everlasting cares employ his mind, without one single remembrance of his lovely Lucinda!—Go, disappointed virgin! Go, mourn the uncertainty of all created bliss! Teach thy soul to aspire after a sure and immutable felicity! For the once gay and gallant Fidelio sleeps in other embraces; even in the icy arms of death! Forgetful, eternally forgetful, of the world—and thee.

Hitherto, one is tempted to exclaim against the king of terrors, and call him capriciously cruel. He seems,

O morte ipsâ mortis tempus indignius! jam destinata erat egregio juveni; jam electus nuptiarum dies; jam nos advocati. Quod gaudium quo mœrore mutatum est! Non possum exprimere verbis, quantum animo vulnus acceperim, quum audivi Fundanum ipsum (ut multa luctuosa dolor invenit) præcipientem, quod in vestes, margaritas, gemmas, fuerat erogaturus, hoc in thura, et unguenta, et odores impenderetur.—*Plin. Lib.* v. *Epist.* 16.

by beginning at the wrong end of the register, to have inverted the laws of nature. Passing over the couch of decrepit age, he has nipped infancy in its bud; blasted youth in its bloom; and torn up manhood in its full maturity.—Terrible indeed are these providences, yet not unsearchable the counsels:

For us they sicken, and for us they die.*

Such strokes must not only grieve the relatives, but surprise the whole neighbourhood. They sound a powerful alarm to heedless dreaming mortals, and are intended as a remedy for our carnal security. Such passing-bells, inculcate loudly our Lord's admonition; "Take ye heed, watch, and pray: for ye know not when the time is."—We nod, like intoxicated creatures, upon the very verge of a tremendous precipice. These astonishing dispensations, are the kind messengers of heaven; to rouse us from our supineness, and quicken us into timely circumspection. I need not, surely, accommodate them with language, nor act as their interpreter. Let every one's conscience be awake, and this will appear their awful meaning—"O! ye sons of men, in the midst of life you are in death. No state, no circumstances can ascertain your preservation a single moment; so strong is the tyrant's arm, that nothing can resist its force; so true his aim that nothing can elude the blow. Sudden as lightning, sometimes, is his arrow launched; and wounds, and kills, in the twinkling of an eye: Never promise yourselves safety in any expedient, but constant preparation. The fatal shafts fly so promiscuously, that none can guess the next victim; therefore, be ye always ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the final summons cometh."

Be ye always ready: for in such an hour as ye think not—Important admonition! Methinks, it reverberates from sepulchre to sepulchre; and addresses me with line upon line, precept upon precept.—The reiterated

* Night Thoughts.

warning, I acknowledge, is too needful—may co-operating grace render it effectual! The momentous truth, though worthy to be engraved on the tables of a most tenacious memory, is but slighly sketched, on the transient flow of passion. We see our neighbours fall; we turn pale at the shock; and feel, perhaps, a trembling dread. No sooner are they removed from our sight; but driven in the whirl of business, or lulled in the languors of pleasure, we forget the providence, and neglect its errand. The impression made on our unstable minds, is like the trace of an arrow through the penetrated air, or the path of a keel in the furrowed wave.—Strange stupidity! To cure it, another monitor bespeaks me, from a neighbouring stone. It contains the narrative of an unhappy mortal, snatched from his friends, and hurried to the awful bar; without leisure, either to take a last farewell of the one, or to put up so much as a single prayer preparatory for the other: killed, according to the usual expression, by a sudden stroke of casualty.

Was it then a random stroke? Doubtless the blow came from an aiming, though invisible hand. God presideth over the armies of heaven; God ruleth among the inhabitants of the earth; and God conducteth what men call chance. Nothing, nothing comes to pass through a blind and undiscerning fatality; if accidents happen, they happen according to the exact foreknowledge, and conformably to the determinate counsels of eternal wisdom. The Lord, with whom are the issues of death, signs the warrant, and gives the high commission. The seemingly fortuitous disaster is only the agent or the instrument appointed to execute the supreme decree. When the king of Israel was mortally wounded, it seemed to be a casual shot. A certain man drew a bow at a venture.* At a venture, as he thought; but his hand was strengthened by an omnipotent aid, and the shaft levelled by an unerring eye. So that what we term casualty, is really provi-

* 1 Kings xxii. 34.

dence, accomplishing deliberate designs, but concealing its own interposition. How comforting this reflection! Admirably adapted, to sooth the throbbing anguish of the mourners, and compose their spirits into a quiet submission! Excellently suited, to dissipate the fears of godly survivors, and create a calm intrepidity even amidst innumerable perils!

How thin is the partition between this world and another! How short the transition, from time to eternity! The partition, nothing more than the breath in our nostrils; and the transition may be made in the twinkling of an eye.—Poor Chremylus, I remember, arose from the diversion of a card-table, and dropt into the dwellings of darkness.—One night, Corinna was all gayety in her spirits, all finery in her apparel, at a magnificent ball. The next night, she lay pale and stiff, an extended corpse, and ready to be mingled with the mouldering dead.—Young Atticus lived to see his ample and commodious seat completed; but not to spend one joyous hour under the stately roof. The sashes were hung to admit the day; but the master's eyes are closed in endless night. The apartments were furnished, to invite society, or administer repose; but their lord rests in the lower parts of the earth, in the solitary, silent chambers of the tomb. The gardens were planned, and a thousand elegant decorations designed; but alas! their intended possessor is gone down to "the place of skulls;" is gone down to the valley of the shadow of death.

While I am recollecting, many, I question not, are experiencing the same tragical vicissitude. The eyes of that sublime Being—who sits upon the circle of the earth, and views all its inhabitants with one comprehensive glance—even now behold many tents in affliction. Such affliction, as overwhelmed the Egyptians in that fatal night, when the destroying angel sheathed his arrows in all the pride of their strength.—Some, sinking to the floor from their easy chair; and deaf even amidst the piercing shrieks of their distracted

relations. Some giving up the ghost, as they sit retired, or lie reclined under the shady arbour, to taste the sweets of the flowery scene.—Some, as they sail, associated with a party of pleasure, along the dancing stream, and through the laughing meads. Nor is the grim intruder mollified, though wine and music flow around.—Some intercepted, as they are returning home; and some interrupted, as they enter upon an important negotiation.—Some arrested with the gain of injustice in their hands; and some surprised, in the very act of lewdness, or the attempt of cruelty.

Legions, legions of disasters, such as no prudence can foresee, and no care prevent, lie in wait to accomplish our doom. A starting horse may throw his rider; may at once dash his body against the stones, and fling his soul into the invisible world. A stack of chimneys may tumble into the street, and crush the unwary passenger under the ruins. Even a single tile, dropping from the roof, may be as fatal as the fall of the whole structure. So frail, so very attenuated is the thread of life, that it not only bursts before the storm, but breaks even at a breeze. The most common occurrences, those from which we suspect not the least harm, may prove the weapons of our destruction. A grape-stone, a despicable fly, may be more mortal than Goliath, with all his formidable armour. Nay, if God give command, our very comforts become killing; the air we breathe, is our bane; and the food we eat, the vehicle of death. That last enemy has unnumbered avenues for his approach; yea, lies intrenched in our very bosom, and holds his fortress in the seat of our life. The crimson fluid, which distributes health, is impregnated with the seeds of death; heat may inflame it, or toil oppress it; and make it destroy the parts it was designed to cherish. Some unseen impediment may obstruct its passage, or some unknown violence may divert its course; in either of which cases, it acts the part of a poisonous draught, or a deadly stab.

Ah! in what perils is vain life engag'd!
What slight neglects, what trivial faults destroy
The hardiest frame! Of indolence, of toil
We die; of want, of superfluity.
The all-surrounding heav'n, the vital air,
Is big with death.

Since then we are so liable to be dispossessed of this earthly tabernacle, let us look upon ourselves only as tenants at will, and hold ourselves in perpetual readiness to depart at a moment's warning. Without such an habitual readiness, we are like wretches, that sleep on the top of a mast, while a horrid gulf yawns, or furious waves rage, below. And where can be the peace, what the satisfaction, of such a state? Whereas, a prepared condition will inspire a cheerfulness of temper, not to be dismayed by any alarming accident; and create a firmness of mind, not to be overthrown by the most threatening dangers. When the city is fortified with walls, furnished with provision, guarded by able and resolute troops, what have the inhabitants to fear? what may they not enjoy? So, just so, or rather by a much surer band, are connected the real taste of life, and the constant thought of death.

I said, Our very comforts may become killing.—And see the truth inscribed by the hand, sealed with the signet, of Fate. The marble, which graces yonder pillar, informs me, that, near it, are deposited the remains of Sophronia; the much-lamented Sophronia, who died in childbed.—How often does this calamity happen! The branch shoots; but the stem withers. The babe springs to light; but she that bare him breathes her last. She gives life, but gives it (O pitiable consideration!) at the expense of her own; and becomes, at once, a mother, and a corpse. Or else, perhaps, she expires in severe pangs, and is herself a tomb for her infant; while the melancholy complaint of a monarch's woe, is the epitaph for them both—The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.* Less to be lamented, in my opinion,

* Isa. xxxvii. 3.

this misfortune, than the other. Better, for the tender stranger, to be stopped in the porch, than to enter, only to converse with affliction. Better, to find a grave in the womb, than to be exposed on a hazardous world—without the guardian of its infantile years, without the faithful guide of its youth.

This monument is distinguished by its finer materials, and more delicate appendages; it seems to have taken its model from an affluent hand, directed by a generous heart, which thought it could never do enough for the deceased. It seems also to exhibit an emblematical picture of Sophronia's person and accomplishments. Is her beauty, or what is more than beauty, her white-robed innocence, represented by the snowy colour? The surface, smoothly polished, like her amiable temper, and engaging manners. The whole adorned, in a well-judged medium between extravagant pomp and sordid negligence; like her undissembled goodness, remote from the least ostentation, yet in all points exemplary.—But ah! how vain, were all these endearing charms! How vain, the lustre of thy sprightly eye! How vain, the bloom of thy bridal youth! How vain, the honours of thy superior birth! How unable to secure the lovely possessor, from the savage violence of death! How ineffectual, the universal esteem of thy acquaintance, the fondness of thy transported husband; or even the spotless integrity of thy character; to prolong thy span, or procure thee a short reprieve! The concurrence of all these circumstances, reminds me of those beautiful and tender lines;

> How lov'd, how valu'd once, avails thee not;
> To whom related, or by whom begot;
> A heap of dust alone remains of thee:
> 'Tis all thou art!—and all the proud shall be![a]—*Pope's Miscell.*

Yet, though unable to divert the stroke, Christianity is sovereign to pluck out the sting of death. Is not

[a] These verses are inscribed on a small, but elegant monument, lately erected in the great church at Northampton; which, in the hieroglyphical decorations, corresponds with the description introduced above. In this circumstance particularly, that it is dedicated to

this the silent language of those lamps which burn, and of that heart which flames; of those palms which flourish, and of that crown which glitters, in the well-imitated and gilded marble? Do they not, to the discerning eye, describe the vigilance of her faith; the fervency of her devotion; her victory over the world;

the memory of an amiable woman, Mrs. Anne Stonehouse, the excellent wife of my worthy friend Dr. Stonehouse; who has seen all the powers of that healing art, to which I, and so many others, have been greatly indebted, failing in their attempts to preserve a life dearer to him than his own.

Nec prosunt domino, quæ prosunt omnibus artes,

No longer his all-healing art avails;
But ev'ry remedy its master fails.

In the midst of this tender distress, he has sought some kind of consolation, even from the sepulchral marble; by teaching it to speak, at once, his esteem for her memory; and his veneration for that religion, which she so eminently adorned. Nor could this be more significantly done, than by summing up her character in that concise but comprehensive sentence, *A sincere Christian*—Concise enough, to be the motto for a mourning ring; yet as comprehensive, as the most enlarged sphere of personal, social, and religious worth: "For, whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report;" are they not all included in that grand and noble aggregate, a sincere Christian?

The first lines, considered in such a connexion, are wonderfully plaintive and pathetic—

"How lov'd, how valu'd once, avails thee not;
To whom related, or by whom begot."

They sound, at least in my ears, like the voice of sorrow, mingled with admiration. The speaker seems to have been lost, for a while, in melancholy contemplation; suddenly breaks out into this abrupt encomium; then melts into tears, and can proceed no farther. Yet, in this case, how eloquent is silence! while it hints the universal esteem which attended, and the superiority of birth which distinguished, the deceased wife; it expresses, beyond all the pomp of words, the yearning affection, and heart-felt affliction, of the surviving husband. Amidst the group of monumental marbles which are lavish of their panegyric, this, I think, resembles the incomparable address of the painter, who, having placed around a beautiful expiring virgin, her friends, in all the agonies of grief, represented the unequalled anguish of the father, with far greater liveliness and strength, or rather with an inexpressible emphasis, by drawing a veil over his face.

If the last lines are a wide departure from the beaten track of our modern epitaphs, and the very reverse of their high flown compliments,

"A heap of dust alone remains of thee!
'Tis all thou art!—and all the proud shall be!"

they are not without a precedent, and one of the most consummate kind; since they breathe the very spirit of that sacred elegy, in which all the heart of the hero and the friend seems to be dissolved—How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! 2 Sam. i. 27.

and the celestial diadem, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give her at that day?*

How happy the husband in such a sharer of his bed, and partner of his fortunes! Their inclinations were nicely-tuned unisons, and all their conversation was harmony. How silken the yoke to such a pair, and what blessings were twisted with such bands! Every joy was heightened, and every care alleviated; nothing seemed wanting to consummate their bliss, but a hopeful progeny rising around them;—that they might see themselves multiplied in their little ones, see their mingled graces transfused into their offspring, and feel the glow of their affection augmented by being reflected from their children. "Grant us this gift," said their united prayers, "and our satisfactions are crowned: we request no more."

Alas! how blind are mortals to future events! how unable to discern what is really good!† Give me children, said Rachel, or else I die‡—an ardor of impatience altogether unbecoming, and as mistaken as

They remind the reader of that awful lesson, which was originally dictated by the supreme wisdom, Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return, Gen. iii. 19.—They inculcate, with all the force of the most convincing evidence, that solemn admonition, delivered by the prophet; Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of? Isa. ii. 22.

That no reader, however inattentive, might mistake the sense and design of this part of the fourth line,

"'Tis all thou art!" ——————

it is guarded above and beneath.—Above, is an expanded book, that seems to be waved, with an air of triumph, over the emblem of death; which we cannot but suppose to be the volume of inspiration, as it exhibits a sort of abridgment of its whole contents, in those animated words: Be ye not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises, Heb. vi. 12.—Beneath, that every part might be pregnant with instruction, are those striking reflections—worthy the consideration of the highest proficient in knowledge and piety, yet obvious to the understanding of the most untaught reader—Life, how short! eternity, how long!—May my soul learn the forcible purport of this short lesson, in her contracted span of time; and all eternity will not be too long to rejoice in having learned it.

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

† Nescia mens hominum fati, sortisque futuræ!
Turno tempus erit, magno cùm optaverit emptum,
Intactum Pallanta; et cùm spolia ista diemque
Oderit.— *Virg.*

‡ Gen. xxx. 1.

it was unbecoming. She dies, not by the disappointment, but by the accomplishment of her desire. If children are to parents like a flowery chaplet, whose beauties blossom with ornament, and whose odours breathe delight, Death, or some fell misfortune, may find means to entwine themselves with the lovely wreath. Whenever our souls are poured out with passionate importunity, after any inferior acquisition, it may be truly said, in the words of our Divine Master, "Ye know not what ye ask."—Does providence withhold the thing that we long for? It denies in mercy, and only withholds the occasion of our misery, perhaps the instrument of our ruin. With a sickly appetite, we often loathe what is wholesome, and hanker after our bane. Where imagination dreams of unmingled sweets, there experience frequently finds the bitterness of woe.

Therefore may we covet immoderately neither this nor that form of earthly felicity, but refer the whole of our condition to the choice of unerring wisdom. May we learn to renounce our own will, and be ready to make a sacrifice of our warmest wishes, whenever they run counter to the good pleasure of God; for, indeed, as to obey his laws is to be perfectly free; so to resign ourselves to his disposal, is to establish our own happiness, and to be secure from fear of evil.

Here a small and plain stone is placed upon the ground, purchased, one would imagine, from the little fund, and formed by the hand of frugality itself; nothing costly, not one decoration added; only a very short inscription, and that so effaced as to be scarcely intelligible. Was the depositary unfaithful to its trust? or were the letters worn by the frequent resort of the surviving family, to mourn over the grave of a most valuable and beloved relative? for I perceive, upon a closer inspection, that it covers the remains of a father —a religious father, snatched from his growing offspring before they were settled in the world, or so much as their principles fixed by a thorough education.

This, sure, is the most complicated distress that has

hitherto come under our consideration: the solemnities of such a dying chamber, are some of the most melting and melancholy scenes imaginable.—There lies the affectionate husband, the indulgent parent, the faithful friend, and the generous master. He lies in the last extremities, and on the very point of dissolution. Art has done its all. The raging disease mocks the power of medicine; it hastens, with resistless impetuosity, to execute its dreadful errand—to rend asunder the silver cord of life, and the more delicate tie of social attachment and conjugal affection.

A servant or two, from a revering distance, cast many a wishful look, and condole their honoured master in the language of sighs. The condescending mildness of his commands, was wont to produce an alacrity of obedience, and render their service a pleasure. The remembrance of both imbitters their grief, and makes it trickle plentifully down their honest cheeks; his friends who have so often shared his joys, and gladdened his mind with their enlivening converse, now are miserable comforters. A sympathizing and mournful pity is all the relief they are able to contribute; unless it be augmented by their silent prayers for the Divine succour, and a word of consolation suggested from the scriptures.* Those poor innocents, the children, crowd around the bed, drowned in tears, and almost frantic with grief, they sob out their little souls, and passionately cry, "Will he leave us? leave us in a helpless condition? leave us to an injurious world?"

These separate streams are all united in the distressed spouse, and overwhelm her breast with an impetuous tide of sorrows. In her the lover weeps, the wife mourns, and all the mother yearns. To her the loss is beyond measure aggravated, by months and years of

* Texts of scripture, proper for such an occasion, containing promises —of support under affliction, Lam. iii. 32. Heb. xii. 6. 2 Cor. iv. 17. —of pardon, Isai. liii. 5. Isai. i. 18. 1 John ii. 1, 2. Acts x. 43.—of justification, Rom. v. 9. Rom. viii. 33, 34. 2 Cor. v. 21.—of victory over death, Psal. xxiii. 4. Psal. lxxiii. 26. 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.—of happy resurrection, John vi. 40. 2 Cor. v. 1. Rev. vii. 16, 17.

delightful society and exalted friendship. Where, alas! can she meet with such unsuspected fidelity, or repose such unreserved confidence? Where find so discreet a counsellor, so improving an example; and a guardian so sedulously attentive to the interests of herself and her children?—See! how she hangs over the languishing bed, most tenderly solicitous to prolong a life, important and desirable far beyond her own; or, if that be impracticable, no less tenderly officious to sooth the last agonies of her dearer self. Her hands, trembling under direful apprehensions, wipe the cold dews from the livid cheeks, and sometimes stay the sinking head on her gentle arms, sometimes rest it on her compassionate bosom.—See! how she gazes, with a speechless ardour, on the pale countenance, and meager features. Speechless her tongue; but she looks unutterable things: while all her soft passions throb with unavailing fondness, and her very soul bleeds with exquisite anguish.

The sufferer, all patient and adoring, submits to the divine will; and by submission, becomes superior to his affliction. He is sensibly touched with the disconsolate state of his attendants, and pierced with an anxious concern for his wife and children. His wife, who will soon be a destitute widow; his children, who will soon be helpless orphans;—"yet, though cast down, not in despair." He is greatly refreshed by his trust in the everlasting covenant, and his hope of approaching glory. Religion gives a dignity to distress. At each interval of ease, he comforts his very comforters; and suffers with all the majesty of woe.

The soul, just going to abandon the tottering clay, collects all her force, and exerts her last efforts. The good man raises himself on his pillow, extends a kind hand to his servants, which is bathed in tears; takes an affecting farewell of his friends; clasps his wife in a feeble embrace; kisses the dear pledges of their mutual love; and then pours all that remains of life and of strength in the following words:—"I die, my dear

children; but God, the everlasting God, will be with you. Though you lose an earthly parent, you have a Father in heaven, who lives for evermore. Nothing, nothing but an unbelieving heart, and irreligious life, can separate you from the regards of his providence—from the endearments of his love."

He could proceed no farther. His heart was full; but utterance failed. After a short pause, with difficulty, great difficulty, he added—"You, the dear partner of my soul, you are now the only protector of our orphans—I leave you under a weight of cares;—but God, who defendeth the cause of the widow—God, whose promise is faithfulness and truth—God hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*—This revives my drooping spirits—Let this support the wife of my bosom.—And now, O Father of compassions, into thy hands I commend my spirit—encouraged by thy promised goodness, I leave my fatherless"—

Here he fainted; fell back upon the bed; and lay for some minutes, bereft of his senses. As a taper, upon the very point of extinction, is sometimes suddenly rekindled and leaps into a quivering flame, so life, before it totally expired, gave a parting struggle, and once more looked abroad from the opening eyelids.—He would fain have spoke—fain have uttered the sentence he began; more than onee he essayed, but the organs of speech were become like a broken vessel; and nothing but the obstructing phlegm rattled in his throat. His aspect, however, spoke affection inexpressible. With all the father, all the husband still living in his looks, he takes one more view of those dear children, whom he had often beheld with a parental triumph. He turns his dying eyes on that beloved woman, who he never beheld but with a glow of delight. Fixed in this posture, amidst smiles of love, and under a gleam of heaven, they shine out their last.

Upon this, the silent sorrow bursts into loud laments. They weep, and refuse to be comforted, till some length

* Heb. xiii. 5.

of time had given vent to the excess of passion, and the consolations of religion had stanched their bleeding woes; then the afflicted family search for the sentence which fell unfinished from those loved, those venerable and pious lips. They find it recorded by the prophet Jeremiah, containing the direction of infinite wisdom, and the promise of unbounded goodness: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.* This, now, is the comfort of their life, and the joy of their heart; they treasure it up in their memories; it is the best of legacies, and an inexhaustible fund; a fund which will supply all their wants by entailing the blessings of heaven on all their honest labours. They are rich, they are happy, in this sacred pledge of the divine favour; they fear no evil, they want no good, because God is their portion, and their guardian God.

No sooner turned from one memento of my own, and memorial of another's decease, but a second, a third, a long succession of these melancholy monitors, crowd upon my sight!† That which has fixed my observation is one of a more grave and sable aspect than the former; I suppose it preserves the relics of a more aged person; one would conjecture that he made somewhat of a figure in his station among the living, as his monument does among the funeral marbles. Let me draw near, and inquire of the stone, "Who, or what, is beneath its surface?"—I am informed he was once the owner of a considerable estate, which was much improved by his own application and management; that he left the world in the busy period of life, advanced a little beyond the meridian.

Probably, replied my musing mind, one of those indefatigable drudges, who rise early; late take rest; and eat the bread of carefulness; not to secure the loving-kindness of the Lord—not to make provision for any reasonable necessity—but only to amass together ten

* Jerem. xlix. 11.
† —— Plurima mortis imago. *Virg.*

thousand times more than they can possibly use. Did he not lay schemes for enlarging his fortune, and aggrandizing his family? Did he not purpose to join field to field, and add house to house, till his possessions were almost as vast as his desires? That, then, he would sit down,* and enjoy what he had acquired; breathe a while from his toilsome pursuit of things temporal, and, perhaps, think a little of things eternal.

But see the folly of worldly wisdom! How silly, how childish, is the sagacity of (what is called) manly and masterly prudence; when it contrives more solicitiously for time, than it provides for eternity! How strangely infatuated are these subtle heads, which weary themselves in concerting measures for phantoms of a day, and scarce bestow a thought on everlasting realities!—When every wheel moves on smoothly; when all the well-disposed designs are ripening apace for execution, and the long-expected crisis of enjoyment seems to approach; behold! God from on high laughs at the Babel-builder. Death touches the bubble, and it breaks, it drops into nothing. The cobweb, most finely spun indeed, but more easily dislodged, is swept away in an instant, and all the abortive projects are buried in the same grave with their projector. So true is that verdict, which the wisdom from above passes, on these successful unfortunates—"They walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain."†

Speak, ye that attended such a one in his last minutes; ye that heard his expiring sentiments; did he not cry out, in the language of disappointed sensuality, "O death! how terrible is thy approach to a man immersed in secular cares, and void of all concern for the never-ending hereafter! Where, alas! is the profit, where the comfort of entering deep into the knowledge, and of being dexterous in the dispatch, of earthly

* —— Hac mente laborem
Sese ferre, senes ut in otia tuta recedant,
Aiunt, cum sibi sint conjecta cibaria. *Hor.*

† Psal. xxxix. 6.

affairs, since I have all the while neglected the one thing needful! Destructive mistake! I have been attentive to every inferior interest; I have laid myself out on the trifles of a moment; but have disregarded heaven; have forgot eternal ages! O! that my days" —Here he was going on to breathe some fruitless wishes, or to form, I know not what, ineffectual resolutions, but a sudden convulsion shook his nerves; disabled his tongue, and, in less than an hour, dissolved his frame.

May the children of this world be warned by the dying words of an unhappy brother, and gather advantage from his misfortune. Why should they pant, with such impatient ardour, after white and yellow earth, as if the universe did not afford sufficient for every one to take a little? Why should they lade themselves with thick clay, when they are to "run for an incorruptible crown, and press towards the prize of their high calling?" Why should they overload the vessel in which their everlasting all is embarked, or fill their arms with superfluities, when they are to swim for their lives? Yet, so preposterous is the conduct of those persons, who are all industry, to heap up an abundance of the wealth which perisheth; but are scarce so much as faintly desirous of being rich towards God.

O! that we may walk through all these glittering toys, at least with a wise indifference, if not with a superior disdain! Having enough for the conveniencies of life, let us only accommodate ourselves with things below, and lay up our treasures in the regions above Whereas, if we indulge an anxious concern, or lavish an inordinate care, on any transitory possessions, we shall rivet them to our affections, with so firm an union, that the utmost severity of pain must attend the separating stroke. By such an eager attachment to what will certainly be ravished from us, we shall only ensure to ourselves accumulated anguish against

the agonizing hour. We shall plant, aforehand, our dying pillow with thorns.*

Some, I perceive, arrived at threescore years and ten, before they made their exit; nay, some few resigned not their breath, till they had numbered fourscore revolving harvests. These, I would hope, "remembered their Creator in the days of their youth, before their strength became labour and sorrow—before that low ebb of languishing nature, when the keepers of the house tremble, and those that look out of the windows are darkened;† when even the lighting down of the grasshopper, is a burden on the bending shoulders, and desire itself fails in the listless, inactive, lethargic soul.—Before those heavy hours come, and those tiresome moments draw nigh, in which there is too much reason to say, "We have no pleasure in them; no improvement from them."

If their lamps were unfurnished with oil, how unfit must they be, in such decrepit circumstances, to go to the market, and buy!‡ for, besides a variety of disorders, arising from the enfeebled constitution, their corruptions must be surprisingly strengthened by such a long course of irreligion. Evil habits must have struck the deepest root; must have twisted themselves with every fibre of the heart, and be as thoroughly ingrained in the disposition, as the soot in the Ethiopian's complexion, or the spots in the leopard's skin. If such a one, under such disadvantages, surmounts all the difficulties which lay in his way to glory, it must be a great and mighty salvation indeed. If such

* Lean not on earth; 'twill pierce thee to the heart;
A broken reed at best, but oft a spear:
On its sharp point peace bleeds, and hope expires.
Night Thoughts, No. III.

† Eccles. xii. 3, 5. I need not remind my reader, that, by the former of these figurative expressions, is signified the enervated state of the hands and arms; by the latter, the dimness of the eyes, or the total loss of sight: that, taken in connexion with other parts of the chapter, they exhibit, in a series of bold and lively metaphors, a description of the various infirmities attendant on old age.

‡ Matt. xxv. 9.

a one escapes destruction, and is saved at the last, it must, without all peradventure, be—so as by fire.*

This is the season, which stands in need of comfort, and is very improper to enter upon the conflict. The husbandman should now be putting in his sickle or eating the fruit of his labours; not beginning to break up the ground, or scatter the seed.—Nothing, 'tis true, is impossible with God: He said, "Let there be light, and there was light:" instantaneous light, diffused as quick as thought, through all the dismal dominion of primeval darkness. At his command, a leprosy of the longest continuance, and of the utmost inveteracy, departs in a moment. He can, in the greatness of his strength, quicken the wretch who has lain dead in trespasses and sins, not four days only, but fourscore years.—Yet trust not, O trust not, a point of such inexpressible importance to so dreadful an uncertainty. God may suspend his power; may withdraw his help; may swear in his wrath, that such abusers of his long-suffering shall "never enter into his rest."

Ye therefore, that are vigorous in health, and blooming in years, improve the precious opportunity. Improve your golden hours, to the noblest of all purposes: such as may render you meet for the inheritance of saints in light; and ascertain your title to a state of immortal youth, to a crown of eternal glory.† —Stand not, all the prime of your day, idle; trifle no longer with the offers of this immense felicity; but make haste, and delay not the time, to keep God's

* 1 Cor. iii. 15.

† May I be permitted to recommend, as a treasure of inestimable value, and a treatise particularly apposite to my subject, Dr. Lucas's Inquiry after Happiness? that part especially, which displays the method, and enumerates the advantages, of improving life, or living much in a little time (Chap. iii. p. 138. of the 6th edit.)—an author—in whom the gentleman, the scholar, and the Christian, are most happily united: a performance, which, in point of solid argument, unaffected piety, and a vein of thought amazingly fertile, has, perhaps, no superior. Nor can I wish my reader a more refined pleasure, or a more substantial happiness, than that of having the sentiments of this entertaining and pathetic writer wove into the very texture of his heart.

commandments. While you are loitering in a gay insensibility, Death may be bending his bow, and marking you out for speedy victims.—Not long ago, I happened to spy a thoughtless jay; the poor bird was idly busied in dressing his pretty plumes, or hopping carelessly from spray to spray. A sportsman coming by observes the feathered rover. Immediately he lifts the tube, and levels his blow; swifter than whirlwind flies the leaden death, and, in a moment, lays the silly creature breathless on the ground.—Such, such may be the fate of the man, who has a fair occasion of obtaining grace to-day, and wantonly postpones the improvement of it til! to-morrow. He may be cut off in the midst of his folly, and ruined for ever, while he is dreaming of being wise hereafter.

Some, no doubt, came to this their last retreat, full of piety, and full of days, "as a shock of corn, ripe with age, and laden with plenty, cometh in, in his season."*—These were children of light, and wise in their generation—wise with that exalted wisdom which cometh from above, and with that enduring wisdom which lasts to eternity—rich also they were, more honourably and permanently rich, than all the votaries of Mammon. The wealth of the one has made itself wings, and is irrecoverably gone; while the wretched acquirers are transmitted to that place of penury and pain, where not so much as one drop of water is allowed to cool their scorched tongues. The stores of the other still abide with them; will never depart from them; but make them glad for ever and ever in the city of their God. Their treasures were such as no created power could take away; such as none but infinite beneficence can bestow, and (oh! comfortable to consider!) such as I, and every indigent longing sinner, may obtain—treasures of heavenly knowledge, and saving faith; treasures of atoning blood, and imputed righteousness.

* Job v. 26.

Here* lie their bodies "in peaceable habitations, and quiet resting places." Here, they have thrown off every burden, and are escaped from every snare; the head aches no more; the eye forgets to weep; the flesh is no longer racked with acute, nor wasted with lingering, distempers. Here, they receive a final release from pain, and an everlasting discharge from sorrow. Here, danger never threatens them, with her terrifying alarms; but tranquillity softens their couch, and safety guards their repose.—Rest then, ye precious relics, within this hospitable gloom; rest in gentle slumbers, till the last trumpet shall give the welcome signal, and sound aloud through all your silent mansions, "Arise; shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."†

To these, how calm was the evening of life! In

* Some, I know, are offended at our burying corpses within the church, and exclaim against it, as a very great impropriety and indecency: but this, I imagine, proceeds from an excessive and mistaken delicacy. If proper care be taken to secure from injury, the foundations of the building, and to prevent the exhalation of any noxious effluvia from the putrefying flesh, I cannot discover any inconveniencies attending it.

The notion, that noisome carcases (as they are called) are very unbecoming a place consecrated to religious purposes, seems to be derived from the antiquated Jewish canon; whereby it was declared, that a dead body imparted defilement to the person who touched it, and polluted the spot where it was lodged: on which account, the Jews were scrupulously careful, to have their sepulchres built at a distance from their houses; and made it a point of conscience not to suffer burial places to subsist in the city. But as this was a rite purely ceremonial, it seems to be entirely superseded by the gospel dispensation.

I cannot forbear thinking, that, under the Christian economy, there is a propriety and usefulness in the custom—usefulness, because it must render our solemn assemblies more venerable and awful; for when we walk over the dust of our friends, or kneel upon the ashes of our relations, this awakening circumstance must strike a lively impression of our own mortality. And what consideration can be more effectual, to make us serious and attentive in hearing; earnest and importunate in praying?

As for the fitness of the usage, it seems perfectly suitable to the design of those sacred edifices; they are set apart for God; not only to receive his worshippers, but to preserve the furniture for holy ministrations, and what is, in a peculiar manner, appropriated to the divine Majesty. Are not the bodies of the saints the Almighty's property? Were they not once the object of his tender love? Are they not still the subjects of his special care? Has he not given com-

* Isai. lx. 1.

what a smiling serenity did their sun go down! When their flesh and their heart failed, how reviving was the remembrance of an all-sufficient Redeemer; once dying for their sins, now risen again for their justification! How cheering the well-grounded hope of pardon for their transgressions, and peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! How did this assuage the agonies, and sweeten the bitterness of death?—Where now is wealth, with all her golden mountains? Where is honour, with all her proud trophies of renown? Where are all the vain pomps of a deluded world? Can they inspire such comfort, can they administer any support in his last extremity? Can they compose the affrighted thoughts; or buoy up the departing soul, amidst all the pangs of dissolution?—The followers of the Lamb seem pleased and triumphant, even at their last gasp. "God's everlasting arms are underneath,"* their fainting heads: His spirit whispers peace and consolation to their consciences. In the strength of

mandment concerning the bones of his elect; and charged the ocean, and enjoined the grave, to keep them until that day? When rocks bright with gems, or mountains rich with mines, are abandoned to the devouring flames, will not these be rescued from the fiery ruin? Will not these be translated into Jehovah's kingdom, and, conjointly with the soul, made "his jewels;" made "his peculiar treasure;" made to shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever?

Is not Christ the Lord of our bodies? Are they not bought with a price? Bought, not with corruptible things, silver and gold, but with his divinely precious blood. And, if the blessed Jesus obtained the redemption of our bodies, at so infinitely dear a rate, can it enter into our hearts to conceive, that he should dislike to have them reposed under his own habitation?—Once more; Are not the bodies of the faithful, temples of the Holy Ghost? And is there not, upon this supposition, an apparent propriety, rather than the least indecorum, in remitting these temples of flesh to the temples made with hands? They are vessels of honour; instruments of righteousness; and even when broken by death, like the fragments of a golden bowl, are valuable; are worthy to be laid up in the safest, most honourable repositories.

Upon the whole, since the Lord Jesus has purchased them, at the expense of his blood; and the blessed spirit has honoured them with his in-dwelling presence; since they are right dear in the sight of the adorable Trinity, and undoubted heirs of a glorious immortality; why should it be thought a thing improper, to admit them to a transient rest, in their heavenly Father's house? Why may they not lie down and sleep, in the outercourts, since they are soon to be introduced into the inmost mansions of everlasting honour and joy?

* Deut xxxiii. 27.

these heavenly succours, they quit the field, not captives but conquerors; with "hopes full of immortality."

And now they are gone.—The struggles of reluctant nature are over: the body sleeps in death; the soul launches into the invisible state. But, who can imagine the delightful surprise, when they find themselves surrounded by guardian angels, instead of weeping friends! How securely do they wing their way, and pass through unknown worlds, under the conduct of those celestial guides! The vale of tears is quite lost. Farewel, for ever, the realms of woe, and range of malignant beings! They arrive on the frontiers of inexpressible felicity; they "are come to the city of the living God;" while a voice sweeter than music in her softest strains, sweet as the harmony of hymning seraphim, congratulates their arrival, and bespeaks their admission: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the heirs of glory may enter in."

Here, then, let us leave the spirits and souls of the righteous; escaped from an entangling wilderness, and received into a paradise of delights! Escaped from the territories of disquietude, and settled in regions of unmolested security! Here, they sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father. Here, they mingle with an innumerable company of angels, and rejoice around the throne of the Lamb; rejoice in the fruition of present felicity, and in the assured expectation of an inconceivable addition to their bliss; when God shall call the heavens from above, and the earth, that he may judge his people.*

* Seneca's Reflections upon the State of holy Souls, delivered from the Burden of the Flesh, are sparkling and fine, yet very indistinct and empty, compared with the particulars mentioned above, and with many others that might be collected from scripture. In hoc tam procelloso, et in omnes tempestates exposito navigantibus mari, nullus portus, nisi mortis est. Ne itaque invideris fratri tuo; quiescit. Tandem liber, tandem tutus, tandem æternus est. Fruitur nunc aperto et libero cœlo; ex humili et depresso, in eum emicuit locum, qui solutas vinculis animas beato recipit sinu; et nunc omnia rerum natura bona cum summa voluptate percipit.—*Sen. ad Polyb.*

Fools accounted their life madness, and their end to be without honour; but they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot, their distinguished and eternal lot, is among the saints!* However, therefore, an undiscerning world may despise, and a profane world vilify, the truly religious, be this the supreme, the invariable desire of my heart—"Let me live the life, and die the death of the righteous. Oh! let my latter end, and future state, be like theirs!"

What figure is that, which strikes my eye, from an eminent part of the wall? It is not only placed in a more elevated situation than the rest, but carries a more splendid and sumptuous air than ordinary. Swords and spears, murdering engines, and instruments of slaughter, adorn the stone with a formidable magnificence.—It proves to be the monument of a noble warrior.

Is such respect, thought I, paid to the memory of this brave soldier, for sacrificing his life to the public good? Then, what honours, what immortal honours, are due to the great captain of our salvation? Who, though Lord of the angelic legions, and supreme commander of all the heavenly hosts, willingly offered himself a bleeding propitiation for sinners!

The one died, being a mortal, and only yielded up a life which was long before forfeited to divine justice; which must soon have been surrendered as a debt to nature, if it had not fallen as a prey to war. But Christ took flesh, and gave up the ghost, though he was the great I AM; the fountain of existence; who calls happiness and immortality all his own. He, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God; He, whose outgoings were from everlasting; even He, was made in the likeness of man, and cut off out of the land of the living. Wonder, O heavens! be astonished, O earth! He died the death, of whom it is witnessed, that He is "the true God, and eternal life."†

The one exposed himself to peril in the service of his sovereign and his country; which, though it was

* Wisdom v. 4, 5. † 1 John v. 20.

glorious to do, yet would have been ignominious, in such circumstances, to have declined. But Christ took the field, though he was the blessed and only potentate; the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Christ took the field, though he was sure to drop in the engagement; and put on the harness, though he knew beforehand that it must reek with his blood. That Prince of heaven resigned his royal person, not barely to the hazard but to the inevitable stroke; to death, certain in its approach, and armed with all its horrors. And for whom? Not for those who were in any degree deserving, but for his own disobedient creatures; for the pardon of condemned malefactors; for a band of rebels, a race of traitors, the most obnoxious and inexcusable of all criminals; whom he might have left to perish in their iniquities, without the least impeachment of his goodness, and to the display of his avenging justice.

The one, 'tis probable, died expeditiously; was suddenly wounded, and soon slain: a bullet lodged in his heart, a sword sheathed in his breast, or a battle-ax cleaving the brain, might put a speedy end to his misery, dispatch him "as in a moment;" whereas the divine Redeemer expired in tedious and protracted torments. His pangs were as lingering as they were exquisite; even in the prelude to his last suffering, what a load of sorrows overwhelmed his sacred humanity! till the intolerable pressure wrung blood instead of sweat from every pore; till the crimson flood stained all his raiment, and tinged the very stones. But when the last scene of the tragedy commenced, when the executioner's hammer had nailed him to the cross, O! how many dismal hours did that illustrious sufferer hang; a spectacle of woe to God, to angels, and to men! His temples mangled with the thorny crown! his hands and feet cleft with the rugged irons! his whole body covered with wounds and bruises! and his soul, his very soul, pierced with pangs of unutterable distress!

So long he hung, that nature, through all her dominions, was thrown into sympathizing commotions. The earth could no longer sustain such barbarous indignities without trembling, nor the sun behold them without horror. Nay, so long did he hang in this extremity of agony and torture, that the alarm reached even the remote regions of the dead. Never, O my soul, never forget the amazing truth. The Lamb of God was seized, was bound, was slaughtered with the utmost inhumanity; and endured death, in all its bitterness, for thee. His murderers, studiously cruel, so guided the fatal cup, that he tasted every drop of its gall, before he drank it off to the very dregs.

Once again: The warrior died like a hero, and fell gallantly in the field of battle. But, died not Christ as a fool dieth?* Not on the bed of honour, with scars of glory in his breast, but like some execrable miscreant, on a gibbet, with lashes of the vile scourge on his back. Yes, the blessed Jesus bowed his expiring head on the accursed tree; suspended between heaven and earth, as an outcast from both, and unworthy of either.

What suitable returns of inflamed and adoring devotion can we make to the Holy One of God; thus dying, that we might live; dying in ignominy and anguish, that we might live for ever in the heights of joy, and sit for ever on thrones of glory. Alas! it is not in us, impotent, insensible mortals, to be duly thankful. He only who confers such inconceivably rich favours, can enkindle a proper warmth of grateful affection: Then build thyself a monument, most gracious Immanuel, build thyself an everlasting monument of gratitude in our souls. Inscribe the memory of thy matchless beneficence, not with ink and pen, but with that precious blood which gushed from thy wounded veins. Engrave it, not with the hammer and

* 2 Sam. iii. 33. Of this indignity our Lord complains—Are you come out as against a thief? Matt. xxvi. 55.

chisel, but with that sharpened spear which pierced thy sacred side. Let it stand conspicuous and indelible, not on outward tables of stone, but on the very inmost tables of our hearts.

One thing more let me observe, before I bid adieu to this intombed warrior, and his garnished sepulchre. How mean are these ostentatious methods of bribing the vote of fame, and purchasing a little posthumous renown! What a poor substitute for a set of memorable actions is polished alabaster, or the mimickry of sculptured marble! The real excellency of this bleeding patriot,* is written on the minds of his countrymen; it would be remembered with applause, so long as the nation subsists, without this artificial expedient to perpetuate it. And such, such is the monument I would wish for myself. Let me leave a memorial in the breasts of my fellow-creatures. Let surviving friends bear witness that I have not lived to myself alone, nor been altogether unserviceable in my generation. Oh! let an uninterrupted series of beneficent offices be the inscription, and the best interests of my acquaintance the plate that exhibits it.

Let the poor, as they pass my grave, point at the little spot, and thankfully acknowledge—"There lies the man, whose unwearied kindness was the constant relief of my various distresses; who tenderly visited my languishing bed, and readily supplied my indigent circumstances. How often were his counsels a guide to my perplexed thoughts, and a cordial to my dejected

* Sir Bevil Granville, slain in the Civil Wars, at an engagement with the rebels.—It may possibly be some entertainment to the reader, if I subjoin Sir Bevil's character, as it is drawn by that celebrated pen which wrote the history of those calamitous times: "That which would have clouded any victory," says the noble historian, "and made the loss of others less spoken of, was the death of Sir Bevil Granville. He was indeed an excellent person, whose activity, interest, and reputation were the foundation of what had been done in Cornwall: his temper and affections so public, that no accident which happened could make any impression upon him; and his example kept others from taking any thing ill, or at least seeming to do so. In a word, a brighter courage, and a gentler disposition, were never married together, to make the most cheerful and innocent conversation."

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spirits! 'Tis owing to God's blessing, on his seasonable charities and prudent consolations, that I now live, and live in comfort."—Let a person, once ignorant and ungodly, lift up his eyes to heaven, and say within himself, as he walks over my bones, "Here are the last remains of that sincere friend who watched for my oul. I can never forget with what heedless gayety I was posting on in the paths of perdition, and I tremble to think into what irretrievable ruin I might quickly have been plunged, had not his faithful admonitions arrested me in the wild career. I was unacquainted with the gospel of peace, and had no concern for its unsearchable treasures; but now, enlightened by his instructive conversation, I see the all-suffi iency of my Saviour; and, animated by his repeated exhortations, I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ. Methinks his discourses, seasoned with religion, and blessed by grace, still tingle in my ears; are still warm on my heart; and, I trust, will be more and more operative, till we meet each other in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The only infallible way of immortalizing our characters, a way equally open to the meanest and most exalted fortune, is, "to make our calling and election sure;" to gain some sweet evidence that our names are written in heaven; then, however they may be disregarded or forgotten among men, they will not fail to be had in everlasting remembrance before the Lord. This is, of all distinctions, far the noblest. Ambition, be this thy object, and every page of scripture will sanctify thy passion; even grace itself will fan thy flame. As to earthly memorials, yet a little while and they are all obliterated. The tongue of those whose happiness we have zealously promoted, must soon be silent in the coffin. Characters cut with a pen of iron, and committed to the solid rock, will ere long cease to be legible;* but as many as are inrolled "in the Lamb's

* —— Data sunt ipsis quoque fata sepulchris. *Juv.*

book of life," He himself declares shall never be blotted out from those annals of eternity.* When a flight of years has mouldered the triumphal column into dust; when the brazen statue perishes under the corroding hand of Time, those honours still continue, still are blooming and incorruptible, in the world of glory.

Make the extended skies your tomb,
Let stars record your worth;
Yet know, vain mortals, all must die,
As nature's sickliest birth.

Would bounteous heav'n indulge my pray'r,
I frame a nobler choice;
Nor, living, wish the pompous pile,
Nor, dead, regret the loss.

In thy fair book of life divine,
My God, inscribe my name;
There let it fill some humble place,
Beneath the slaughter'd Lamb.

Thy saints, while ages roll away,
In endless fame survive;
Their glories, o'er the wrongs of time
Greatly triumphant, live.

Yonder entrance leads, I suppose, to the vault. Let me turn aside, and take one view of the habitation and its tenants. The sullen door grates upon its hinges; not used to receive many visitants, it admits me with reluctance and murmurs. What meaneth this sudden trepidation, while I descend the steps, and am visiting the pale nations of the dead? Be composed, my spirits, there is nothing to fear in these quiet chambers. "Here, even the wicked cease from troubling."

Good heavens! what a solemn scene! How dismal the gloom! Here is perpetual darkness, and night even at noon-day. How doleful the solitude! not one trace of cheerful society, but sorrow and terror seems to have made this their dreadful abode. Hark! how the hollow dome resounds at every tread; the echoes that long have slept are awakened, and lament and sigh along the walls.

A beam or two finds its way through the grates, and reflects a feeble glimmer from the nails of the coffins.

* Rev. iii. 5.

So many of those sad spectacles, half concealed in shades, half seen dimly by the baleful twilight, add a deeper horror to these gloomy mansions. I pore upon the inscriptions, and am just able to pick out—That these are the remains of the rich and renowned. No vulgar dead are deposited here. The most illustrious, and right honourable, have claimed this for their last retreat; and, indeed, they retain somewhat of a shadowy pre-eminence. They lie, ranged in mournful order, and in a sort of silent pomp, under the arches of an ample sepulchre; while meaner corpses, without much ceremony, "go down to the stones of the pit."

My apprehensions recover from their surprise; I find here are no phantoms, but such as fear raises. However, it still amazes me to observe the wonders of this nether world; those who received vast revenues, and called whole lordships their own, are here reduced to half a dozen feet of earth, or confined in a few sheets of lead. Rooms of state, and sumptuous furniture, are resigned, for no other ornament than the shroud, for no other apartment than the darksome niche. Where is the star that blazed upon the breast, or coronet that glittered round the temples? The only remains of departed dignity are, the weather-beaten hatchment, and the tattered escutcheon. I see no splendid retinue surrounding this solitary dwelling; the lordly equipage hovers no longer about the lifeless master; he has no other attendant than a dusty statue, which, while the regardless world is as gay as ever, the sculptor's hand has taught to weep.

Those who gloried in high-born ancestors and noble pedigree, here drop their lofty pretensions; they acknowledge kindred with creeping things, and quarter arms with the meanest reptiles; they say to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. Or, should they still assume the style of distinction, ah! how important were the claim! how apparent the ostentation! Is it said by

their monument, Here lies the great? How easily is it replied by the spectator!—

> ——— False marble! Where?
> Nothing but poor and sordid dust lies here.

Mortifying truth! sufficient one would think to wean the most sanguine appetite from this transitory state of things; from its sickly satisfactions, its fading glories, its vanishing treasures.

> For now, ye lying vanities of life!
> Ye ever-tempting, ever-cheating train!
> Where are you now? And what is your amount?

What is all the world to these poor breathless beings? What are their pleasures? A bubble broke. What their honours? A dream that is forgotten. What the sum-total of their enjoyments below? Once, perhaps, it appeared to be inexperienced and fond desire, something considerable; but now death has measured it with his line, and weighed it in his scale, what is the up-shot? Alas! it is shorter than a span; lighter than the dancing spark, and driven away like the dissolving smoke.

Indulge, my soul, a serious pause; recollect all the gay things, that were wont to dazzle thy eyes and inveigle thy affections; here, examine those baits of sense; here, form an estimate of their real value. Suppose thyself, first, among the favourites of fortune, who revel in the lap of pleasure, who shine in the robes of honour, and swim in tides of inexhausted riches; yet how soon will the passing bell proclaim thy exit! And when once that iron call has summoned thee to thy future reckoning, where would all these gratifications be? At that period, how will all the pageantry of the most affluent, splendid, or luxurious circumstances, vanish into empty air! And is this a happiness so passionately to be coveted?

I thank you, ye relics of sounding titles and magnificent names; ye have taught me more of the littleness of the world, than all the volumes of my library. Your nobility arrayed in a winding-sheet, your grandeur

mouldering in an urn, are the most indisputable proofs of the nothingness of created things. Never, surely, did Providence write this important point in such legible characters, as in the ashes of my lord or on the corpse of his grace.* Let others, if they please, pay their obsequious court to your wealthy sons, and ignobly fawn, or anxiously sue for preferments. My thoughts shall often resort, in pensive contemplation, to the sepulchres of their sires; and learn, from their sleeping dust—to moderate my expectations from mortals—to stand disengaged from every undue attachment to the little interests of time—to get above the delusive amusements of honour, the gaudy tinsels of wealth, and all the empty shadows of a perishing world.

Hark! what sound is that!—In such a situation, every noise alarms. Solemn and slow, it breaks again upon the silent air—'Tis the striking of the clock; designed, one would imagine, to ratify all my serious meditations. Methinks it says Amen, and sets a seal to every improving hint; it tells me, that another portion of my appointed time is elapsed. One calls it, "The knell of my departed hours." 'Tis the watchword to vigilance and activity. It cries in the ear of reason, "Redeem the time: catch the favourable gales of opportunity: O! catch them while they breathe, before they are irrecoverably lost. The span of life shortens continually; thy minutes are all upon the wing, and hasten to be gone; thou art a borderer upon eternity, and making incessant advances to the state thou art contemplating." May the admonition sink deep into an attentive and obedient mind! May it teach me that heavenly arithmetic, of "numbering my days, and applying my heart unto wisdom."

I have often walked beneath the impending promontory's craggy cliff; I have sometimes trod the vast spaces of the lonely desert, and penetrated the inmost recesses of the dreary cavern, but never, never beheld

* ———— Mors sola fatetur
Quantula sint hominum corpuscula. *Juv.*

nature lowering with so tremendous a form; never felt such impressions of awe striking cold on my heart, as under these black-browed arches, amidst these mouldy walls, and surrounded by such rueful objects: where melancholy, deepest melancholy, for ever spreads her raven wings. Let me now emerge from the damp and dreadful obscurity. Farewell, ye seats of desolation, and shades of death! Gladly I revisit the realms of day.

Having cast a superficial view upon these receptacles of the dead, curiosity prompts my inquiry to a more intimate survey. Could we draw back the covering of the tomb; could we discern what those are now, who once were mortals—O! how would it surprise and grieve us! Surprise us, to behold the prodigious transformation which has taken place on every individual; grieve us, to observe the dishonour done to our natur, in general within these subterraneous lodgments!

Here the sweet and winning aspect, that wore perpetually an attractive smile, grins horribly a naked, ghastly skull. The eye that outshone the diamond's brilliancy, and glanced its lovely lightning into the most guarded heart, alas! where is it? Where shall we find the rolling sparkler? How are all its sprightly beams eclipsed! totally eclipsed!—The tongue, that once commanded all the power of eloquence in this strange land, has "forgot its cunning." Where are now those strains of harmony which ravished our ears? Where is that flow of persuasion which carried captive our judgments? The great master of language and of song is become silent as the night that surrounds him The pampered flesh, so lately clothed in purple and fine linen, how is it covered rudely with clods of clay! There was a time when the timorously nice creature would scarce "adventure to set a foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness;"* but is now enwrapped in clammy earth, and sleeps on no softer a pillow than the ragged gravel-stones. Here "the strong men bow

* Deut. xxviii. 56.

themselves;" the nervous arm is unstrung; the brawny sinews are relaxed; the limbs, not long ago the seats of vigour and activity, lie down motionless; and the bones which were as bars of iron, are crumbled into dust.

Here the man of business forgets all his favourite schemes, and discontinues the pursuit of gain. Here is a total stand to the circulation of merchandise, and the hurry of trade. In these solitary recesses, as in the building of Solomon's temple, is heard no sound of the hammer and ax; the winding-sheet and the coffin are the utmost bound of all earthly devices; "hitherto may they go, but no farther." Here the sons of pleasure take a final farewel of their dear delights. No more is the sensualist anointed with oil, or crowned with rose-buds; he chants no more to the melody of the viol, nor revels any longer at the banquet of wine. Instead of sumptuous tables and delicious treats, the poor voluptuary is himself a feast for fattened insects; the reptile riots on his flesh, "the worm feeds sweetly on him."*—Here also beauty fails; bright beauty drops her lustre here. O! how her roses fade, and her lilies languish, in this bleak soil! How does the grand leveller pour contempt upon the charmer of our hearts! How turn to deformity, what captivated the world before!

Could the lover have a sight of his once enchanting fair-one, what a startling astonishment would seize him!—"Is this the object I not long ago so passionately admired! I said she was divinely fair, and thought her somewhat more than mortal; her form was symmetry itself; every elegance breathed in her air, and all the graces waited on her motions: 'twas music when she spoke; but, when she spoke encouragement, 'twas little less than rapture. How my heart danced to those charming accents! And can that, which some weeks ago was to admiration lovely, be now so insufferably loathsome? Where are those

* Job xxiv. 20.

blushing cheeks? Where the coral lips? Where that ivory neck on which the curling jet, in such glossy ringlets flowed? With a thousand other beauties of person, and ten thousand delicacies of action.*—Amazing alteration! delusory bliss! Fondly I gazed upon the glittering meteor; it shone brightly, and I mistook it for a star; for a permanent and substantial good; but how is it fallen! fallen from an orb, not its own! And all that I can trace on earth, is but a putrid mass."

Lie, poor Florella! lie deep, as thou dost, in obscure darkness; let night, with her impenetrable shades, always conceal thee; may no prying eye be witness to thy disgrace, but let thy surviving sisters think upon thy state when they contemplate the idol in the glass: when the pleasing image rises gracefully to view, surrounded with a world of charms, and flushed with joy at the consciousness of them all—then, in those minutes of temptation and danger, when vanity uses to steal into the thoughts—then, let them remember what a veil of horror is drawn over a face, which was once beautiful and brilliant as theirs. Such a seasonable reflection might regulate the labours of the toilet, and create a more earnest solicitude to polish the jewel than to varnish the casket; it might then become their highest ambition to have the mind decked with divine virtues, and dressed after the amiable pattern of their Redeemer's holiness.

And would this prejudice their persons, or depreciate their charms?—Quite the reverse. It would spread a sort of heavenly glory over the finest set of features, and heighten the loveliness of every other engaging accomplishment. What is yet a more inviting consideration, these flowers would not wither with nature, nor be tarnished by time; but would open continually into richer beauties, and flourish even in the winter of

* Quo fugit Venus? Heu! Quove color? decens
Quo motus? Quid habet illius, illius,
Quæ spirabat amores,
Quæ me surpuerat mihi? *Hor.*

age. But the most incomparable recommendation of these noble qualities is, that from their hallowed relics, and from the fragrant ashes of the phœnix, will, ere long, arise an illustrious form, bright as the wings of angels, lasting as the light of the new Jerusalem.

For my part, the remembrance of this sad revolution shall make me ashamed to pay my devotion to a shrine of perishing flesh; and afraid to expect all my happiness, from so brittle a joy. It shall teach me, not to think too highly of well-proportioned clay, though formed in the most elegant mould, and animated with the sweetest soul. 'Tis heaven's last, best, and crowning gift, to be received with gratitude, and cherished with love, as a most valuable blessing; not worshipped, with the incense of flattery, and strains of fulsome adoration, as a goddess.—It will cure, I trust, the dotage of my eyes; and incline me always to prefer the substantial "ornaments of a meek and virtuous spirit," before the transient decorations of white and red on the skin.

Here I called in my roving meditations from their long excursion on this tender subject; fancy listened a while to the soliloquy of a lover; but now judgment resumes the reins, and guides my thoughts to more near and self-interesting inquiries.—However, upon a review of the whole scene, crowded with spectacles of mortality, and trophies of death, I could not forbear smiting my breast, and fetching a sigh, and lamenting over the noblest of all visible beings, laid prostrate under the feet of "the pale horse and his rider." *—I could not forbear repeating that pathetic exclamation, "Oh! thou, Adam, what hast thou done!"† What desolation has thy disobedience wrought in the earth!—See the malignity, the ruinous malignity of sin! Sin has demolished so many stately structures of flesh; sin has made such havock among the most excellent ranks of God's lower creation; and sin (that deadly bane of our nature) would have plunged our better part into the

* Rev. vi. 8. † 2 Esdr. vii. 11.

execrable horrors of the nethermost hell; had not our merciful Mediator interposed, and given himself for our ransom —Therefore what grateful acknowledgments does the whole world of penitent sinners owe; what ardent returns of love will a whole heaven of glorified believers pay to such a friend, benefactor, and deliverer!

Musing upon these melancholy objects, a faithful remembrancer suggests from within—"Must this sad change succeed in me also? Am I to draw my last gasp, to become a breathless corpse, and be what I deplore?* Is there a time approaching when this body shall be carried out upon the bier, and consigned to its clay-cold bed? While some kind acquaintance, perhaps, may drop one parting tear, and cry, Alas! my brother!—Is the time approaching?"—Nothing is more certain. A decree much surer than the law of the Medes and Persians, has irrevocably determined the doom.

Should one of these ghastly figures burst from his confinement, and start up in frightful deformity before me—should the haggard skeleton lift a clattering hand, and point it full in my view—should it open the stiffened jaws—and, with a hoarse tremendous murmur, break this profound silence—should it accost me, as Samuel's apparition addressed the trembling king—"The Lord shall deliver thee also into the hands of death: yet a little while, and thou shalt be with me."† The solemn warning, delivered in so striking a manner, must strongly impress my imagina-

* I pass, with melancholy state,
By all these solemn heaps of fate;
And think, as soft and sad I tread
Above the venerable dead,
"Time was, like me, they life possess'd;
And time will be when I shall rest." *Parnel.*

† 1 Sam. xxviii. 19. On this place, the Dutch translator of the Meditations has added a note, to correct, very probably, what he supposes a mistake. On the same supposition, I presume, the compilers of our rubric ordered the last verse of Eccius. xlvi. to be omitted in the daily service of the church. But that the sentiment hinted above is strictly true,—that it was שמואל הוא Samuel himself, (not an infernal spirit,

tion; a message in thunder would scarce sink deeper. —Yet there is abundantly greater reason to be alarmed, by that express declaration of the Lord God Almighty, "Thou shalt surely die."—Well then, since sentence is passed—since I am a condemned man, and know not when the dead warrant may arrive—let me die to sin, and die to the world, before I die beneath the stroke of a righteous God. Let me employ the little uncertain interval of respite from execution; in preparing for a happier state, and a better life. That when the fatal moment comes, and I am commanded to shut my eyes upon all things here below, I may open them again to see my Saviour in the mansions above.

Since this body, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made, must fall to pieces in the grave; since I must soon resign all my bodily powers to darkness, inactivity, and corruption, let it be my constant care to use them well, while I possess them! Let my hands be stretched forth to relieve the needy; and always be more "ready to give, than to receive."—Let my knees bend in deepest humiliation before the throne of grace; while my eyes are cast down to the earth in penitential confusion, or devoutly looking up to heaven for pardoning mercy!—In every friendly interview, let the "law of kindness dwell on my lips;" or rather, if the seriousness of my acquaintance permits, let the gospel of peace flow from my tongue. O! that I might be enabled, in every public concourse, to lift up my voice like a trumpet, and pour abroad a more joyful sound than its most melodious accents, in proclaiming the glad tidings of free salvation!—Be shut, my ears, resolutely shut, against the malevolent whispers of slander, and the contagious breath of filthy talking. But be swift to hear the instructions of wisdom; be all attention when your Redeemer speaks; imbibe the precious

personating the prophet) who appeared to the female necromancer at Endor, appeared not in compliance with any diabolical incantation, but in pursuance of the divine commission,—this, I think, is fully proved in the historical account of the life of David, Vol. I. chap. 23.

truths, and convey them carefully to the heart.—Carry me, my feet, to the temple of the Lord, to the beds of the sick, and houses of the poor.—May all my members, devoted entirely to my divine Master, be the willing instruments of promoting his glory!

Then, ye embalmers, ye may spare your pains. These works of faith, and labours of love, these shall be my spices and perfumes. Enwrapped in these, I would lay me gently down, and sleep sweetly in the blessed Jesus, hoping that God will "give commandment concerning my bones;" and one day fetch them up from the dust, as silver from the furnace, purified, "I say, not seven times, but seventy times seven."

Here my contemplation took wing, and in an instant alighted in the garden adjoining to Mount Calvary. Having viewed the abode of my deceased fellow-creatures; methought, I longed to see the place, where our Lord lay.—And, O! what a marvellous spectacle was once exhibited in this memorable sepulchre! He, "who clothes himself with light, as with a garment; and walks upon the wings of the wind;"* He was pleased to wear the habiliments of mortality, and dwelt among the prostrate dead.—Who can repeat the wondrous truth too often? Who can dwell upon the transporting theme too long? He, who sits enthroned in

* The Scriptures, speaking of the Supreme Being, say, He walketh upon the waves of the sea, to denote his uncontrollable power—Job ix. 8. He walketh in the circuit of heaven, to express the immensity of his presence—Job xxii. 14. He walketh upon the wings of the wind, to signify the amazing swiftness of his operation—Psal. civ. 3. In which last phrase there is, I think, an elegance and emphasis not taken notice of by our commentators, yet unequalled in any writer. Not, He flieth, He runneth; but, He walketh; and that on the very wings of the wind; on the most impetuous of elements; roused into its utmost rage, and sweeping along with inconceivable rapidity.—A tumult in nature, not to be described, is the composed and sedate work of the Deity. A speed not to be measured, is (with reverence I use the expression, and to comport with our low methods of conception) the solemn and majestic foot-pace of Jehovah.—How flat are the following lines, even in the great master of lyric song,

Ocyor cervis, et agente nimbos,
Ocyor euro,

when compared with this inimitable stroke of divine poetry!—He walketh upon the wings of the wind.

glory, and diffuses bliss among all the heavenly hosts; He was once a pale and bloody corpse, and pressed this little spot.

O death! how great was thy triumph in that hour! Never did thy gloomy realms contain such a prisoner before.—Prisoner! did I say? No; he was more than conqueror! He arose far more mightily than Samson, from a transient slumber; broke down the gates, and demolished the strong-holds, of those dark dominions. —And this, O mortals, this is your only consolation and security; Jesus has trod the dreadful path, and smoothed it for your passage.—Jesus, sleeping in the chambers of the tomb, has brightened the dismal mansion, and left an inviting odour in those beds of dust. The dying Jesus! (Never let the comfortable truth depart from your minds! The dying Jesus) is your sure protection, your unquestionable passport, through the territories of the grave. Believe in him; and they shall prove "a highway to Sion;" shall transmit you safe to paradise. Believe in him; and you shall be no losers, but unspeakable gainers by your dissolution. For, hear what the oracle of heaven says, upon this important point, "Whoso believeth in me shall never die."*—What sublime and emphatical language is this! Thus much, at least, it must import—The nature of that last change "shall be surprisingly altered for the better. It shall no longer be inflicted as a punishment; but rather be vouchsafed as a blessing. To such persons it shall come attended with such a train of benefits, as will render it a kind of happy impropriety to call it dying. Dying! No; 'tis then they truly begin to live; their exit is the end of their frailty, and their entrance upon perfection; their last groan, is the prelude to life and immortality."

O ye timorous souls, that are terrified at the sound of the passing bell; that turn pale at the sight of an opened grave; and can scarce behold a coffin or a skull, without a shuddering horror! Ye that are in

* John xi. 26.

bondage to the grisly tyrant, and tremble at the shaking of his iron rod, cry mightily to the Father of your spirits, for faith in his dear Son. Faith will free you from your slavery;* faith will embolden you to tread on (this fiercest of) serpents.†—Old Simeon, clasping the child Jesus in the arms of his flesh, and the glorious Mediator in the arms of his faith, departs with tranquillity and peace. That bitter persecutor Saul, having won Christ, being found in Christ, longs to be dismissed from cumbrous clay, and kindles into rapture at the prospect of dissolution.‡ Methinks, I see another of Immanuel's followers, trusting in his Saviour, leaning on his beloved, go down to the silent shades with composure and alacrity.§—In this powerful name, an innumerable company of sinful creatures have set up their banners, and "overcome, through the blood of the Lamb." Authorized by the Captain of thy Salvation, thou also mayst set thy feet upon the neck of this king of terrors; furnished with this antidote, thou also mayst play around the hole of the asp, and put thy undaunted hand on this cockatrice-den.‖ Thou mayst feel the viper¶ fastening to thy mortal part, and fear no evil: thou shalt one

* Death's terror is the mountain faith removes:
'Tis faith disarms destruction.—
Believe and look with triumph on the tomb.

These, and some other quotations, I am proud to borrow from the Night-Thoughts, especially from Night the Fourth. In which, energy of language, sublimity of sentiment, and the most exquisite beauties of poetry, are the least perfections to be admired. Almost every line glows with devotion; rises into the most exalted apprehensions of the adorable Redeemer; and is animated with the most lively faith in his all-sufficient mediation. The author of this excellent performance has the peculiar felicity of ennobling all the strength of style, and every delicacy of imagination, with the grand and distinguished truths of Christianity. These thoughts give the highest entertainment to the fancy, and impart the noblest improvement to the mind. They not only refine our taste, but prepare us for death, and ripen us for glory. I never take up this admirable piece, but I am ready to cry out—Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens: i. e. "Inspire me with such a spirit, and life shall be delightful, nor death itself unwelcome."

† Luke x. 19.
‡ Phil. i. 23.—2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.
§ 2 Pet. i. 14.
‖ Isai. xi. 8.
¶ Acts xxviii. 3—5.

day shake it off by a joyful resurrection, and suffer no harm.

Resurrection! That cheering word eases my mind of an anxious thought, and solves a most momentous question. I was going to ask, "Wherefore do all these corpses lie here, in this abject condition? Is this their final state? Has death conquered? and will the tyrant hold captivity captive? How long wilt thou forget them, O Lord? For ever?"—No, saith the voice from heaven, the word of divine revelation,—the righteous are all "prisoners of hope."* There is an hour (an awful secret that, and known only to all-foreseeing wisdom) an appointed hour there is, when an act of grace will pass the great seal above, and give them an universal discharge; a general delivery from the abodes of corruption.—Then shall the Lord Jesus descend from heaven, with the shout of the archangel and the trump of God. Destruction itself shall hear his call, and the obedient grave give up her dead: in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they shake off the sleep of ten thousand years; and spring forth, like the bounding roe, to "meet their Lord in the air."

And O! with what cordial congratulations, what transporting endearments, do the soul and body, those affectionate companions, re-unite! But with how much greater demonstrations of kindness are they both received by their compassionate Redeemer! The Antient of Days, who comes in the clouds of heaven, is their friend, their father, their bridegroom. He comes with irresistible power and infinite glory; but they have nothing to fear from his majestic appearance. Those tremendous solemnities, which spread desolation and astonishment through the universe, serve only to inflame their love, and heighten their hopes. The Judge, the awful Judge, amidst all his magnificence and splendour, vouchsafes to confess their names; vouchsafes to commemorate their fidelity, be-

* Zech. ix. 12.

fore all the inhabitants of the skies, and the whole assembled world.

Hark! the thunders are hushed. See! the lightnings cease their rage; the angelic armies stand in silent suspense; the whole race of Adam is wrapped in pleasing or anxious expectation.—And now, that adorable Person, whose favour is better than life, whose acceptance is a crown of glory, lifts up the light of his countenance upon the righteous. He speaks; and what ravishing words proceed from his gracious lips! What ecstasies of delight they enkindle in the breasts of the faithful!—I accept you, O my people! Ye are they that believed in my name. Ye are they, that renounced yourselves, and are complete in me; I see no spot or blemish in you; for ye are washed in my blood, and clothed with my righteousness. Renewed by my spirit, ye have glorified me on earth, and have been faithful unto death; come then, ye servants of holiness, enter into the joy of your Lord. Come, ye children of light! ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom that shall never be removed; wear the crown which fadeth not away; and enjoy pleasures for evermore!"

Then it will be one of the smallest privileges of the righteous, that they shall languish no more; that sickness will never again show her pale countenance in their dwellings.* Death itself will be "swallowed up in victory:" that fatal javelin, which has drank the blood of monarchs, and finds its way to the hearts of all the sons of Adam, shall be utterly broken. That enormous scythe, which has struck empires from their root, and swept ages and generations into oblivion, shall lie by in perpetual uselessness. Sin also, which filled thy quiver, thou insatiate archer!—Sin, which strung thy arm with resistless vigour—which

* Isaiah, speaking of the new Jerusalem, mentions this as one of its immunities—The inhabitants thereof shall no more say, I am sick. Another clause in its royal charter runs thus, God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain.—Isai. xxxiii. 24; Rev. xxi. 4.

pointed all thy shafts with inevitable destruction—sin will then be done away. Whatever is frail or depraved will be thrown off with our grave-clothes; all to come is perfect holiness and consummate happiness; the term of whose continuance is eternity.

O eternity! eternity! how are our boldest, our strongest thoughts, lost and overwhelmed in thee! Who can set landmarks to limit thy dimensions; or find plumbets to fathom thy depths? Arithmeticians have figures, to compute all the progressions of time, astronomers have instruments to calculate the distances of the planets; but what numbers can state, what lines can gauge, the lengths and breadths of eternity? "It is higher than heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, broader than the sea."*

Mysterious, mighty existence! A sum, not to be lessened by the largest deductions! An extent not to be contracted by all possible diminutions! None can truly say, after the most prodigious waste of ages, "So much of eternity is gone." For, when millions of centuries are elapsed, it is but just commencing; and when millions more have run their ample round, it will be no nearer ending. Yea, when ages, numerous as the bloom of spring, increased by the herbage of summer, both augmented by the leaves of autumn, and all multiplied by the drops of rain, which drown the winter; when these, and ten thousand times ten thousand more—more than can be represented by any similitude, or imagined by any conception—when all these are revolved and finished—eternity, vast, boundless, amazing eternity, will only be beginning!

What a pleasing, yet awful thought is this! full of delight and full of dread. O! may it alarm our fears, quicken our hopes, and animate all our endeavours! Since we are so soon to launch into this endless and inconceivable state; let us give all diligence, to secure

* Job xi. 8, 9.

our entrance into bliss.—Now let us give all diligence, because there is no alteration in the scenes of futurity. The wheel never turns: all is steadfast and immoveable beyond the grave; whether we are then seated on the throne, or stretched on the rack, a seal will be set to our condition by the hand of everlasting mercy, or inflexible justice.—The saints always rejoice amidst the smiles of heaven; their harps are perpetually tuned, their triumphs admit of no interruption.—The ruin of the wicked is irremediable. The fatal sentence, once passed, is never to be repealed; no hope of exchanging their doleful habitations; but all things bear the same dismal aspect, for ever and ever.

The wicked—My mind recoils* at the apprehension of their misery; it has studiously waved the fearful subject; and seems unwilling to pursue it, even now. But 'tis better to reflect upon it, for a few minutes, than to endure it to eternal ages. Perhaps the consideration of their aggravated misery may be profitably terrible: may teach me more highly to prize the Saviour, who "delivers from going down into the bottomless pit;" may drive me, like the avenger's sword, to this only city of refuge, for obnoxious sinners.

The wicked seem to lie here, like malefactors, in a deep and strong dungeon, reserved against the day of trial.—"Their departure was without peace;" clouds of horror sat lowering upon their closing eye-lids; most sadly foreboding the "blackness of darkness for ever." When the last sickness seized their frame, and the inevitable change advanced—when they saw the fatal arrow fitting to the strings—saw the deadly archer, aiming at their heart, and felt the envenomed shaft fastened in their vitals—Good God! what fearfulness came upon them! What horrible dread overwhelmed them! How did they stand, shuddering and aghast, upon the tremendous precipice; excessively afraid to plunge into the abyss of eternity, yet utterly unable to maintain their standing on the verge of life!

* —Animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit.—*Virg.*

O! what pale reviews, what startling prospects, conspire to augment their sorrows! They look backward, and, behold! a most melancholy scene! Sins unrepented of; mercy slighted; and the day of grace ending! They look forward, and nothing presents itself but the righteous Judge, the dreadful tribunal, and a most solemn reckoning. They roll around their affrighted eyes on attending friends. If accomplices in debauchery, it sharpens their anguish to consider this farther aggravation of their guilt—that they have not sinned alone, but drawn others into the snare. If religious acquaintance, it strikes a fresh gash into their hearts to think of never seeing them any more, but only at an unapproachable distance, separated by the unpassable gulf.

At last, perhaps, they begin to pray; finding no other possible way of relief, they are constrained to apply unto the Almighty. With trembling lips and a faltering tongue, they cry unto that Sovereign Being, "who kills and makes alive." But why have they deferred, so long deferred, their addresses to God? Why have they despised all his counsels, and stood incorrigible under his incessant reproofs? How often have they been forewarned of these terrors, and most importunately entreated to seek the Lord while he might be found? I wish they may obtain mercy at the eleventh, at the last hour. I wish they may be snatched from the jaws, the opened, the gaping, the almost closing jaws of damnation. But, alas! who can tell whether affronted Majesty will lend an ear to their complaint? Whether the Holy One will work a miracle of grace in behalf of such transgressors? He may, for aught any mortal knows, "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh."

Thus they lie, groaning out the poor remains of life; their limbs bathed in sweat; their heart struggling with convulsive throes; pains insupportable throbbing in every pulse, and innumerable darts of agony transfixing their conscience.

In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement;
Runs to each avenue; and shrieks for help,
But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!
A little longer, yet a little longer,
O! might she stay, to wash away her crimes,
And fit her for her passage! Mournful sight!
Her very eyes weep blood; and every groan
She heaves is big with horror; but the foe,
Like a staunch murd'rer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close thro' ev'ry lane of life,
Nor misses once the track; but presses on,
Till, forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks.*——

If this be the end of the ungodly, "My soul, come not thou into their secret! Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!" How awfully accomplished is that prediction of inspired wisdom! Sin, though seemingly sweet in the commission, yet at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Fly, therefore, from the tents, O fly from the ways of such wretched men.

Happy dissolution! were this the period of their woes. But, alas! all these tribulations are only "the beginning of sorrows;" a small drop only from that "cup of trembling," which is mingled for their future portion. No sooner has the last pang dislodged their reluctant souls, but they are hurried into the presence of an injured angry God: not under the conducting care of beneficent angels, but exposed to the insults of accursed spirits, who lately tempted them, now upbraid them, and will for ever torment them. Who can imagine their confusion and distress, when they stand, guilty and inexcusable, before their incensed Creator? They are received with frowns; the God that made them has no "mercy on them;"† the Prince of Peace rejects them with abhorrence; he consigns them over to chains of darkness, and receptacles of despair, against the severer doom, and more public infamy, of the great day; then all the vials of wrath will be emptied upon these wretched creatures. The law they have violated,

* See a valuable Poem, entitled The Grave.
† Isaiah xxvii. 2.

and the gospel they have slighted; the power they have defied, and the goodness they have abused, will all get themselves honour in their exemplary destruction. Then God, the God to whom vengeance belongeth, will draw the arrow to the very head, and set them as the mark of his inexorable displeasure.

Resurrection will be no privilege to them; but immortality itself, their everlasting curse. Would they not bless the grave, "that land where all things are forgotten," and wish to lie eternally hid in its deepest gloom? But the dust refuses to conceal their persons, or to draw a veil over their practices. They also must awake, must arise, must appear at the bar, and meet the Judge—a Judge, before whom "the pillars of heaven tremble, and the earth melts away"—a Judge, once long-suffering, and very compassionate, but now unalterably determined to teach stubborn offenders, what it is to provoke the omnipotent Godhead; what it is to trample upon the blood of his Son, and offer despite to all the gracious overtures of his spirit.

O! the perplexity! the distraction! that must seize the impenitent rebels, when they are summoned to the great tribunal! What will they do in this day of severe visitation? this day of final decision? Where? How? Whence can they find help? To which of the saints will they turn? whither betake themselves for shelter or for succour? Alas! 'tis all in vain! 'tis all too late. Friends and acquaintance know them no more: men and angels abandon them to their approaching doom; even the Mediator, the Mediator himself, deserts them in this dreadful hour. To fly will be impracticable, to justify themselves still more impossible; and now, to make any supplications, utterly unavailable.

Behold! the books are opened—the secrets of all hearts are disclosed—the hidden things of darkness are brought to the light. How empty, how ineffectual now, are all those refined artifices, with which hypocrites imposed upon their fellow-creatures, and pre-

served a character in the sight of men! The jealous God, who has been about their path, and about their bed, and spied out all their ways, sets before them the things that they have done. They cannot answer him one in a thousand, nor stand in the awful judgment. The heavens reveal their iniquities, and the earth rises up against them.* They are speechless with guilt, and stigmatized with infamy, before all the armies of the sky, and all the nations of the redeemed. What a favour would they esteem it, to hide their ashamed heads in the bottom of the ocean, or even to be buried beneath the ruins of the tottering world!

If the contempt poured upon them be thus insupportable, O! how will their hearts endure when the sword of infinite indignation is unsheathed, and fiercely waved around their defenceless heads, or pointed directly at their naked breasts? How must the wretches scream with wild amazement, and rend the very heavens with their cries, when the right-aiming thunderbolts go abroad!—go abroad, with a dreadful commission, to drive them from the kingdom of glory, and plunge them, not into the sorrows of a moment, or the tortures of an hour, but into all the restless agonies of unquenchable fire and everlasting despair.†

Misery of miseries! too shocking for reflection to dwell upon; but if so dismal to foresee, and that at a distance, together with some comfortable expectation of escaping it—O! how bitter, how inconceivably bitter, to bear, without any intermission, or any mitigation, through hopeless and eternal ages!

Who has any bowels of pity? Who has any sentiments of compassion? Who has any tender concern for his fellow-creatures?—Who? In God's name, and

* Job xx. 27.

† Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,
That comes to all: but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsum'd.—*Milton.*

for Christ's sake, let him show it; by warning every man, and beseeching every man, to seek the Lord while he may be found; to throw down the arms of rebellion before the act of indemnity expires; submissively to adore the Lamb, while he holds out the golden sceptre. Here let us act the friendly part to mankind. Here let the whole force of our benevolence exert itself, in exhorting whomsoever we are likely to influence, to take the wings of faith unfeigned, of repentance undelayed, and flee away from this wrath to come.

Upon the whole, what stupendous discoveries are these! Lay them up in a faithful remembrance, O my soul. Recollect them with the most serious attention, when thou liest down and when thou risest up. When thou walkest, receive them for thy companions; when thou talkest, listen to them as thy prompters; and whatever thou doest, consult them as thy directors. Influenced by these considerations, thy views will greaten, thy affections be exalted, and thou thyself raised above the tantalizing power of perishing things. Duly mindful of these, it will be the sum of thy desires, and the scope of thy endeavours, to gain the approbation of that Sovereign Being, who will then fill the throne, and pronounce the decisive sentence. Thou wilt see nothing worth a wish,* in comparison of having His will for thy rule, His glory for thy aim, and His Holy Spirit for thy ever-actuating principle.

Wonder, O man, be lost in admiration at those prodigious events which are coming upon the universe. Events, the greatness of which nothing finite can measure. Such as will cause whatever is considerable or momentous in the annals of all generations to sink into littleness and nothing. Events (Jesus prepare us for their approach, defend us when they take place!) big with the everlasting fates of all the living and all

* Great day of dread, decision, and despair!
At thought of thee, each sublunary wish
Lets go its eager grasp, and quits the world.—*Night Th.*

the dead.—I must see the graves cleaving, the sea teeming, and swarms unsuspected, crowds unnumbered, yea, multitudes of thronging nations, rising from both.—I must see the world in flames, must stand at the dissolution of all terrestrial things, and be an attendant on the burial of nature.—I must see the vast expanse of the sky wrapt up like a scroll, and the incarnate God issuing forth from light inaccessible, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels, to judge both men and devils.—I must see the curtain of time drop, see all eternity disclosed to view, and enter upon a state of being that will never, never have an end.

And ought I not (let the vainest imagination determine, ought I not) to try the sincerity of my faith, and take heed to my ways? Is there an inquiry, is there a care, of greater, of equal, of comparable importance? Is not this an infinitely pressing call, to see that my loins are girded about, my lamp trimmed, and myself dressed for the bridegroom's appearance? That, washed in the fountain opened in my Saviour's side, and clad with the marriage garment wove by his obedience, I may be found in peace, unblameable, and unreproveable. Otherwise, how shall I stand with boldness when the stars of heaven fall from their orbs? How shall I come forth erect and courageous, when the earth itself reels to and fro like a drunkard?* How shall I look up with joy, and see my salvation drawing nigh, when the hearts of millions and millions fail for fear?

Now, Madam, lest my Meditations set in a cloud, and leave any unpleasing gloom upon your mind, let me once more turn to the brightening prospects of the righteous. A view of them, and their delightful expectations, may serve to exhilarate the thoughts which have been musing upon melancholy subjects, and hovering about the edges of infernal darkness. Just as a spacious field, arrayed in cheerful green, relieves and reinvigorates the eye which has fatigued itself by

* Isaiah xxiv. 20.

poring upon some minute, or gazing upon some glaring object.

The righteous seem to lie by in the bosom of the earth, as a weary pilot in some well-sheltered creek, till all the storms which infest this lower world are blown over. Here they enjoy safe anchorage, are in no danger of foundering amidst the waves of prevailing iniquity, or of being shipwrecked on the rocks of any powerful temptation. But ere long we shall behold them hoisting the flag of hope, riding before a sweet gale of atoning merit and redeeming love, till they make, with all the sails of an assured faith, the blessed port of eternal life.

Then, may the honoured friend to whom I am writing, rich in good works, rich in heavenly tempers, but inexpressibly richer in her Saviour's righteousness —O! may she enter the harbour like a gallant stately vessel, returned successful and victorious from some grand expedition, with acclamations, honour, and joy! While my little bark, attendant on the solemnity, and a partaker of the triumph, glides humbly after, and both rest together in the haven—the wished-for, blissful haven, of perfect security and everlasting repose.

REFLECTIONS

ON A

FLOWER-GARDEN.

I look upon pleasure, which we take in a garden, as one of the most innocent delights in human life. A garden was the habitation of our first Parents before the Fall. It is naturally apt to fill the mind with calmness and tranquillity, and to lay all its turbulent passions at rest. It gives us a great insight into the contrivance and wisdom of Providence, and suggests innumerable subjects for meditation.

Spectator, Vol. VII. No. 477.

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REFLECTIONS

ON A

FLOWER-GARDEN.

IN A LETTER TO A LADY.

MADAM,

SOME time ago my meditations took a turn among the tombs; they visited the awful and melancholy mansions of the dead,* and you was pleased to favour them with your attention.—May I now beg the honour of your company in a more inviting and delightful excursion?—in a beautiful flower-garden; where I lately walked, and at once regaled the sense, and indulged the fancy.

It was early in a summer morning, when the air was cool, the earth moist, the whole face of the creation fresh and gay. The noisy world was scarce awake. Business had not quite shook off his sound sleep; and Riot had but just reclined his giddy head. All was serene: all was still: every thing tended to inspire tranquillity of mind, and invite to serious thought.

Only the wakeful lark had left her nest, and was mounting on high, to salute the opening day. Elevated in air, she seemed to call the laborious husbandman to his toil, and all her fellow-songsters to their

* "Discourses on the vanity of the creature, which represent the barrenness of every thing in this world, and its incapacity of producing any solid or substantial happiness, are useful. Those speculations also, which show the bright side of things, and lay forth those innocent entertainments, which are to be met with among the several objects that encompass us, are no less beneficial." *Spect. Vol. V. No.* 393. —Upon the plan of these observations, the preceding and following reflections are formed

notes.—Earliest of birds, said I, companion of the dawn, may I always rise at thy voice! Rise, to offer the mattin-song, and adore that beneficent Being, "who maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice."

How charming to rove abroad at this sweet hour of prime! To enjoy the calm of nature; to tread the dewy lawns; and taste the unrifled freshness of the air!

> Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
> With charm of earliest birds.—*Milt. Par. Lost*, B. iv. 641.

What a pleasure do the sons of Sloth lose? Little, ah! little is the sluggard sensible, how delicious an entertainment he foregoes, for the poorest of all animal gratifications.*

The grayness of the dawn decays gradually: abundance of ruddy streaks tinge the fleeces of the firmament, till at length the dappled aspect of the east is lost in one ardent and boundless blush.—Is it the surmise of imagination, or do the skies really redden with shame to see so many supinely stretched on their drowsy pillows?—Shall man be lost in luxurious ease? Shall man waste these precious hours in idle slumbers, while the vigorous sun is up, and going on his Maker's errand? While all the feathered choir are hymning the Creator, and paying their homage in harmony?——No. Let him heighten the melody of the tuneful tribes, by adding the rational strains of devotion. Let him improve the fragrant oblations of nature, by mingling

* See! how revelation and reason, the scriptures and the classics, unanimously exhort to this most beneficial practice. They both invite us to early rising, by the most engaging motives, and the most allurring representations.

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth.—*Cant.* vii. 11, 12.

> Luciferi primo cum sidere, frigida rura
> Carpamus: dum mane novum, dum gramina canent,
> Et ros in tenera pecori gratissimus herba est.—
> *Virg. Georg.* III.

with the rising odours, the more refined breath of praise.

'Tis natural for man to look upwards; to throw his first glance upon the objects that are above him.

> Strait towards heav'n my wond'ring eyes I turn'd,
> And gaz'd a while the ample sky.—*Par. Lost*, B. viii. 257.

Prodigious theatre! Where lightnings dart their fire, and thunders utter their voice. Where tempests spend their rage, and worlds unnumbered roll at large!—O the greatness of that mighty hand, which meteth out this amazing circumference with a span! O the immensity of that wonderful Being, before whom this unmeasurable extent is no more than a point!—And O (thou pleasing thought!) the unsearchable riches of that mercy, which is greater than the heavens!* Is more enlarged and extensive, in its gracious exercise, than these illimitable tracts of air, and sea, and firmament! Which pardons crimes of the most enormous size, and the most horrid aggravations; pardons them in consideration of the Redeemer's atonement, with perfect freeness, and the utmost readiness! More readily, if it were possible, than this all-surrounding expanse admits, within its circuit, a ridge of mountains, or even a grain of sand.

Come hither, then ye awakened trembling sinners. Come,† weary and heavy-laden with a sense of your

* Psal. cviii. 4.

† The lines which follow, are admirably descriptive of the spirit and practice hinted above. In them desire pants; prayer wrestles; and faith, as it were, grasps the prize.—I take leave to transplant them into this place; and I could wish them a better, a more conspicuous situation, than either their new or their native soil. Their native soil, is no other than the lamentation of a sinner, written by Mr. Sternhold. Notwithstanding the unpromising genius of the performance, I think, we may challenge the greatest masters to produce any thing more spirited and importunate; more full of nature, or more flushed with life.

> Mercy, good Lord, mercy I crave;
> This is the total sum;
> For mercy, Lord, is all my suit;
> Lord, let thy mercy come.

The short sentences—Not a single copulative—The frequent repetition of the divine name—The almost incessant reiteration of the blessing,

iniquities; condemn yourselves; renounce all reliance on any thing of your own. Let your trust be in the tender mercy of God, for ever and ever.

In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.*—Behold him coming forth from the chambers of the east. See! the clouds, like floating curtains, are thrown back at his approach. With what refulgent majesty does he walk abroad! How transcendently bright is his countenance; shedding day, and inexhaustible light, through the universe!—Is there a scene, though finished by the most elaborate and costly refinements of art, "comparable to these illustrious solemnities of opening sunshine? Before these, all the studied pageantry of the theatre, the glittering economy of an assembly, or even the heightened ornaments of a royal palace, hide their diminished heads, and shrink into nothing."—I have read of a person, so struck with the splendours of this noble luminary, that he imagined himself made on purpose to contemplate its glories. O! that Christians would adopt his persuasion, and transfer it to the Sun of Righteousness! Thus applied, it would cease to be a chimerical notion, and become a most important truth. For sure I am, it is the supreme happiness of the eternal state; and therefore may well be the ruling concern of this present life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.—Nor do I stand alone in this opinion. The very best judge of whatever is valuable in science, or perfective of our nature; a judge, who formed his taste on the maxims of paradise, and received the finishings of his education in the third heavens; this judge determines to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. He possessed, in his own person, the finest, the most admired accomplishments; yet pronounces

so passionately desired, and inexpressibly needed.—This is the genuine language of ardour; these are beauties obvious to every eye; and cannot fail either to please the judicious taste, or to edify the gracious heart.

* Psal. xix. 4.

them no better than dung, in comparison of the super-eminent excellency* of this saving knowledge.

Methinks, I discern a thousand admirable properties in the sun. 'Tis certainly the best material emblem of the Creator. There is more of God in its lustre, energy, and usefulness, than in any other visible being. To worship it as a deity, was the least inexcusable of all the heathen idolatries. One scarce can wonder that fallen reason should mistake so fair a copy for the adorable original. No comparison in the whole book of sacred wisdom pleases me more than that which resembles the blessed Jesus, to yonder regent of the day,† who now advances on his azure road, to scatter light and dispense gladness through the nations.

What were all the realms of the world but a dungeon of darkness, without the beams of the sun? All their fine scenes hid from our view, lost in obscurity. —In vain we roll around our eyes in the midnight gloom; in vain we strive to behold the features of amiable nature. Turn whither we will, no form or comeliness appears. All seems a dreary waste, an undistinguished chaos, till the returning hours have unbarred the gates of light, and let forth the morn.— Then, what a prospect opens! The heavens are paved with azure, and strewed with roses. A variety of the liveliest verdures array the plains. The flowers put on a glow of the richest colours. The whole creation stands forth, dressed in all the charms of beauty. The ravished eye looks round, and wonders.

And what had been the condition of our intellectual nature without the great Redeemer, and his divine revelation?—Alas! What absurd and unworthy apprehensions did the pagan sages form of God! What idle dreams, what childish conjectures were their doctrines of a future state!—How did the bulk even of that favoured nation the Jews weary themselves in very

* Το υπερεχον της γνωσεως. *Phil.* iii. 7.

† Unto you, that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings. *Mal* iv. 2.

vanity, to obtain peace and reconciliation with their offended Jehovah! till Jesus arose upon our benighted minds, and brought life and immortality to light; till He arose to enlighten the wretched Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel.

Now we no longer cry out with a restless impatience, Where is God my maker? For we are allowed to contemplate the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, in the face of Jesus Christ.—Now we no longer inquire, with an unsatisfied solicitude, "Which is the way to bliss?" because Jesus has marked the path, by his shining example, and left us an unerring clue in his holy word.—Now we have no more reason to proceed with misgiving hearts, in our journey to eternity; or to ask anxiously, as we go, "Who will roll away the stone, and open the everlasting doors? Who will remove the flaming sword, and give us admission into the delights of paradise?" For it is done, all done, by the Captain of our Salvation. Sin he has expiated, by the unblemished sacrifice of himself. The law he has fulfilled, by his perfect obedience. The sinner he transforms, by his sanctifying spirit.—In a word, he hath both presented us with a clear discovery of good things to come, and administered to us an abundant entrance into the final enjoyment of them.

Whenever, therefore, we bless God for the circling seasons and revolving day, let us adore, thankfully adore Him, for the more precious appearance of the Sun of Righteousness and His glorious gospel; without which, we should have been groping, even to this hour, in spiritual darkness and the shadow of death. Without which, we must have wandered in a maze of inextricable uncertainties; and have "stumbled upon the dark mountains" of error, till we fell into the bottomless pit of perdition.

Without that grand enlivening principle, what were this earth but a lifeless mass? A rude lump of inactive matter? The trees could never break forth into leaves,

nor the plants spring up into flowers. We should no more behold the meadows, mantled over with green, nor the valleys standing thick with corn. Or to speak in the beautiful language of a prophet,* No longer would the fig-tree blossom, nor fruit be in the vine: the labour of the olive would fail, and the fields could yield no meat: the flocks must be cut off from the fold, and there would be no herd in the stalls.—The sun darts its beams among all the vegetable tribes, and paints the spring and enriches the autumn. This pierces to the roots of the vineyard and the orchard, and sets afloat those fermenting juices, which at length burst into floods of wine, or bend the boughs with a mellow load.—Nor are its favours confined to the upper regions, but distributed unto the deepest recesses of creation. It penetrates the beds of metal, and finds its way to the place of the sapphires. It tinctures the seeds of gold, that are ripening into ore; and throws a brilliancy into the water of the diamond, that is hardening on its rock.—In short, the beneficial agency of this magnificent luminary is inexpressible. It beautifies and impregnates universal nature. "There is nothing hid from the heart thereof."

Just in the same manner were the rational world dead in trespasses and sins, without the reviving energy of Jesus Christ. He is the "Resurrection and the Life:" the overflowing fountain of the one, and the all-powerful cause of the other. The second Adam is a quickening spirit, and all his saints live through him. He shines upon their affections; and they shoot forth into heavenly graces, and abound in the fruits of righteousness. Faith unfeigned, and love undissembled, those noblest productions of the renewed nature, are the effects of his operation on the mind. Not so much as one divine disposition could spread itself, not one Christian habit unfold and flourish, without the kindly influences of his grace.

As there is no fruitfulness, so likewise no cheerful-

* Hab. iii. 17.

ness, without the sun.*—When that auspicious sovereign of the day diffuses the mildness of his morning splendour, he creates an universal festival. Millions of glittering insects awake into existence, and bask in his rays. The birds start from their slumbers, and pour their delighted souls in harmony. The flocks, with bleating accents, hail the welcome blessing. The valleys ring with rural music; the hills echo back the artless strains. All that is vocal joins in the general choir: all that has breath exults in the cheering influence.—Whereas, was that radiant orb extinguished, a tremendous gloom would ensue, and horror insupportable. Nay, let it only be eclipsed, for a few minutes, and all nature assumes an air of sadness. The heavens are wrapt in sables, and put on a kind of mourning: the most sprightly animals hang down their dejected heads: the songsters of the grove are struck dumb: howling beasts roam abroad for prey: ominous birds come forth and screech: the heart of man fails, or a sudden pang seizes the foreboding mind.—So, when Christ hides away his face, when faith loses sight of that consolation of Israel, how gloomy are the prospects of the soul! Our God seems to be a consuming fire, and our sins cry loudly for vengeance. The thoughts bleed inwardly; the Christian walks heavily. All without is irksome; all within is disconsolate.—Lift up then, most gracious Jesus, thou nobler Dayspring from on high! O lift up the light of thy countenance upon thy people! reveal the fulness of thy mediatorial sufficiency; make clear our title to this great salvation, and thereby impart

> What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
> The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy.†

In one instance more, let me pursue the similitude. The sun, I observe, pours his lustre all around to every distance, and in every direction. Profusely liberal of

* "The sun, which is as the great soul of the universe, and produces all the necessaries of life, has a particular influence in cheering the mind of man, and making the heart glad." *Spect. Vol. V. No. 387.*

† Pope's Eth. Ep.

his gifts, he illuminates and cheers all the ends of the earth, and the whole compass of the skies. The east reddens with his rising radiance, and the western hills are gilded with his streaming splendours. The chilly regions of the north are cherished by his genial warmth, while the southern tracts glow with his fire.—Thus are the influences of the Sun of Righteousness diffusive and unconfined. The generations of old felt them; and generations yet unborn will rejoice in them. The merits of his precious death extended to the first, and will be propagated to the last ages of mankind.—May they, ere long, visit the remotest climates and darkest corners of the earth! Command thy gospel, blessed Jesus, thy everlasting gospel, to take the wings of the morning, and travel with yonder sun. Let it fly upon strong pinions among every people, nation, and language; that where the heat scorches, and the cold freezes, thou mayst be known, confessed, and adored! that strangers to thy name, and enemies to thy doctrine, may be enlightened with the knowledge, and won to the love, of thy truth! O may that best of eras come; that wished-for period advance, when all the ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations worship before Him![*]

From the heavens we retire to the earth.—Here the drops of dew, like so many liquid crystals,[†] sparkle upon the eye. How brilliant and unsullied is their lustre! How little inferior to the proud stone, which irradiates a monarch's crown! They want nothing but solidity and permanency to equal them with the finest treasures of the jeweller's casket.—Here, it must be confessed, they are greatly deficient; short-lived ornaments; possessed of little more than a momentary radiance. The sun that lights them up will soon melt them into air, or exhale them into vapours. Within

* Psal. xxii. 27.

† Now morn, her rosy steps in th' eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl.—*Milton.*

another hour, we may "look for their place and they shall be away."—O! may every good resolution of mine and of my flock's; may our united breathings after God not be like these transient decorations of the morning, but like the substantial glory of the growing day! The one shines more and more, with augmented splendours; while the other, having glittered gaily for a few moments, disappear and are lost.

How sensibly has this dew refreshed the vegetable kingdoms! The fervent heat of yesterday's sun had almost parched the face, and exhausted the sweets of nature; but what a sovereign restorative are these cooling distillations of the night! How they gladden and invigorate the languishing herbs! Sprinkled with these reviving drops, their verdure deepens; their bloom is new-flushed; their fragrance, faint or intermitted, becomes potent and copious.—Thus does the ever-blessed spirit revive the drooping troubled conscience of a sinner. When that Almighty Comforter sheds his sweet influence on the soul, displays the all-sufficient sacrifice of a divine Redeemer, and "witnesses with our spirit," that we are interested in the Saviour, and by this means are children of God; then what a pleasing change ensues! Former anxieties are remembered no more. Every uneasy apprehension vanishes. Soothing hopes, and delightful expectations succeed. The countenance drops its dejected mien; the eyes brighten with a lively cheerfulness; while the lips express the heart-felt satisfaction in the language of thanksgiving and the voice of melody.—In this sense, merciful God, be as the dew unto Israel! "Pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing." And O! let not my fleece be dry, while heavenly benediction descends upon all around.

Who can number these pearly drops? They hang on every hedge, they twinkle from every spray, and adorn the whole herbage of the field. Not a blade of grass, not a single leaf, but wears the watery pendants. So vast is the profusion, that it baffles the arithme-

tician's art.—Here let the benevolent mind contemplate and admire that emphatical scripture, which from this elegant similitude, describes the increase of the Messiah's kingdom. The royal prophet speaking of Christ, and foretelling the success of his religion, has this remarkable expression,* The dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning; *i. e.* as the morning is the mother of dews, produces them as it were from a prolific womb, and scatters them with the most lavish abun-

* Psalm cx. 3. מרחם משחר לך טל ילדתך. The most exact translation of this difficult passage is, I apprehend, as follows; Præ rore uteri auroræ, tibi est ros juventutis vel prolis tuæ. The dew of thy birth is larger, more copious, than the dew which proceeds from the womb of the morning.—I cannot acquiesce in the new version; because that disjoins the womb of the morning from the dew of thy birth. Whereas, they seem to have a clear affinity, and a close connexion. The womb of the morning is, with the utmost pertinency, applied to the conception and production of dews; agreeably to a delicate line in that great master of just description, and lively painting, Mr. Thomson:

The meek-ey'd morn appears, mother of dews.—*Summer.*

We meet with a fine expression in the book of Job, which may serve to confirm this remark; may illustrate the propriety of the phrase used in this connexion:—"Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of dew?" It seems, the oriental writers delighted to represent the dew as a kind of birth, as the offspring of the morning. And if so, surely there could be no image in the whole compass of the universe better adapted to the psalmist's purpose, or more strongly significant of those multitudes of proselytes, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; by the powerful energy of his word and spirit.—Upon this supposition, the whole verse describes

The willing subjection,
The gracious accomplishments,
And the vast number,

} of Christ's converts:

q. d. In the day of thy power, when thy glorious gospel shall be published in the world, and accompanied with marvellous efficacy—In that memorable period, thy people discontinuing the former oblations, commanded under the mosiac law, shall devote themselves as so many living sacrifices to thy honour. Not constrained by force, but charmed with thy excellency, they shall come in volunteers to thy service, and be free-will offerings in thy church. Neither shall they be "empty vines," or bare professors; but shall walk in all the beauties of holiness, and bring forth such amiable fruit, as will adorn the doctrine they embrace.—What is still more desirable, they shall be as numerous as they are willing and holy. Born to Thee in numbers, immense and inconceivable; exceeding even the countless myriads of dew-drops, which are begotten by the night, and issue from the womb of the recent morning.

By this interpretation, the text, I think, is cleared of its obscurity; and appears both truly sublime, and perfectly just.

May I be pardoned the digression, and acquitted from presumption,

vengeance, trembled through all her powers, just as that strong mountain tottered to its centre; pangs of remorse, and agonies of fear, preceded their new birth. They were reduced to the last extremities, almost overwhelmed with despair before they found rest in Jesus Christ.—Others have been recovered from a vain conversation, by methods more mild and attractive. The Father of Spirits applied himself to their teachable minds in "a still and small voice." His grace came down, as the rain into a fleece of wool; or as these softening drops which now water the earth. The kingdom of God took place in their souls, without noise or observation. They passed from death unto life, from a carnal to a regenerate state, by almost imperceptible advances. The transition resembled the growth of corn: was very visible when effected, though scarce sensible while accomplishing.—O thou Author and finisher of our faith! recall us from our wanderings, and re-unite us to thyself! Whether thou alarm us with thy terrors, or allure us with thy smiles, whether thou drive us with the scourge of conviction, or draw us with the cords of love: let us, in any-wise, return to thee; for thou art our supreme good; thou art our only happiness.

Before I proceed farther, let me ascend the terrace and take one survey of the neighbouring country.—What a prospect rushes upon my sight! How vast, how various, how "full and plenteous with all manner of store!" Nature's whole wealth!—What a rich and inexhaustible magazine is here; furnishing subsistence for every creature! Methinks I read in these spacious volumes, a most lively comment upon that noble celebration of the divine beneficence; He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.

> These are thy glorious works, parent of good,
> Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
> Thus wond'rous fair! Thyself how wond'rous then!—*Milton.*

The fields are covered deep, and stand thick with

corn; they expand the milky grain to the sun, while the gales now inclining, now raising each flexile stem, open all their ranks to the agency of his beams. Which will soon impart a firm consistence to the grain, and a glossy golden hue to the ear. That they may be qualified to fill the barns of the husbandman with plenty, and his heart with gladness.

Yonder lie the meadows, smoothed into a perfect level: decorated with an embroidery of the gayest flowers, and loaded with spontaneous crops of herbage;* which, converted into hay, will prove a most commodious provision for the barrenness of winter; will supply with fodder our serviceable animals, when all the verdure of the plain is killed by frosts or buried in snows. A winding stream glides along the flowery margin, and receives the image of the bending skies, and waters the roots of many a branching willow. 'Tis stocked, no doubt, with a variety of fish, which afford a solitary diversion to the angler, and nourish for his table a delicious treat. Nor is it the only merit of this liquid element to maintain the finny nations; it also carries cleanliness, and dispenses fruitfulness wherever it rolls the crystal current.

The pastures, with their verdant mounds, chequer the prospect, and prepare a standing repast for our cattle. There, "our oxen are made strong to labour, and our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands." There, the horse acquires vigour for the dispatch of our business, and speed to expedite our journeys. From thence the kine bring home their udders, distended with one of the richest and healthiest liquors in the world.

On several spots a grove of trees, like some grand colonnade, erects its towering head. Every one projects a friendly shade for the beasts, and creates an hospitable lodging for the birds. Every one stands ready to furnish timber for a palace, masts for a navy, or, with a

* ——— Injussa virescunt
Gramina ——— Virg.

more condescending courtesy, fuel for our hearths.—One of them seems skirted with a wild uncultivated heath, which, like well-disposed shades in painting, throws an additional lustre on the more ornamented parts of the landscape. Nor is its usefulness like that of a foil, relative only, but real. There several valuable creatures are produced and accommodated, without any expense or care of ours. There, likewise, spring abundance of those herbs which assuage the smart of our wounds, and allay the fiery tumults of the fever; which impart floridity to our circulating fluids, add a more vigorous tone to our active solids, and thereby repair the decays of our enfeebled constitutions.

Nearer the houses we perceive an ample spread of branches, not so stately as the oaks, but more amiable for their annual services. A little while ago I beheld them, and all was one beauteous, boundless waste of blossoms. The eye marvelled at the lovely sight, and the heart rejoiced in the prospect of autumnal plenty. But now, the blooming maid is resigned for the useful matron. The flower is fallen, and the fruit swells out on every twig.—Breathe soft, ye winds! O spare the tender fruitage, ye surly blasts! Let the pear-tree suckle her juicy progeny, till they drop into our hands and dissolve in our mouths. Let the plum hang unmolested upon her boughs, till she fatten her delicious flesh, and cloud her polished skin with blue. And as for the apples, that staple commodity of our orchards, let no injurious shocks precipitate them immaturely to the ground, till revolving suns have tinged them with a ruddy complexion, and concocted them into an exquisite flavour. Then what copious hoards, of what burnished rinds, and what delightful relishes, will replenish the store-room! Some to present us with an early entertainment, and refresh our palates amidst the sultry heats. Some to borrow ripeness from the falling snows, and carry autumn into the depths of winter Some to adorn the salver,

make a part of the dessert, and give an agreeable close to our feasts.* Others, to fill our vats with a foaming flood, which, mellowed by age, may sparkle in the glass with a liveliness and delicacy little inferior to the blood of the grape.

I observe several small inclosures, which seem to be apprehensive of some hostile visit from the north, and therefore are defended, on that quarter, by a thick wood or a lofty wall. At the same time they cultivate an uninterrupted correspondence with the south, and throw open their whole dimensions to its friendly warmth; one in particular lies within the reach of a distinguishing view, and proves to be a kitchen-garden. It looks, methinks, like a plain and frugal republic. Whatever may resemble the pomp of courts, or the ensigns of royalty, is banished from this humble community. None of the productions of the olitory affect finery, but all are habited with the very perfection of decency. Here those celebrated qualities are eminently united, the utmost simplicity with the exactest neatness.†—A skilful hand has parcelled out the whole ground into narrow beds and intervening alleys. The same discreet management has assigned to each verdant family a peculiar and distinct abode; so that there is no confusion amidst the great multiplicity, because every individual knows its proper home, and all the tribes are ranged with perfect regularity.—If it be pleasing to behold their orderly situation, and their modest beauties, how much more delightful to consider the advantages they yield! What a fund of choice accommodations is here! What a source of wholesome dainties! And all for the enjoyment of man. Why does the parsley, with her frizzled locks, shag the border; or why the celery, with her whitening arms, perforate the mould, but to render his soups savoury? The asparagus shoots its tapering stems, to

* ———— Ab ovo
Usque ad mala ——— *Hor.*

† Simplex munditiis.—*Hor.*

offer him the first-fruits of the season; and the artichoke spreads its turgid top, to give him a treat of vegetable marrow. The tendrils of the cucumber* creep into the sun, and, though basking in its hottest rays, they secrete for their master, and barrel up for his use the most cooling juices of the soil. The beans stand firm, like files of embattled troops; the peas rest upon their props, like so many companies of invalids; while both replenish their pods with the fatness of the earth, on purpose to pour it on their owner's table.—Not one species, among all this variety of herbs, is a cumberer of the ground; not a single plant but is good for food, or some way salutary. With so beneficent an economy are the several periods of their ministration settled, that no portion of the year is left destitute of nourishing esculents. What is still more obliging, every portion of the year affords such esculents as are best suited to the temperature of the air, and the state of our bodies. Why then should the possessor of so valuable a spot envy the condition of kings? † since he may daily walk amidst rows of peaceable and obsequious, though mute subjects; every one of which renders him some agreeable present, and pays him a willing tribute; such as is most happily adapted both to supply his wants and to regale his taste, to furnish him at once with plenty and with pleasure.

At a distance, one descries the mighty hills. They heave their huge ridges among the clouds, and look like the barriers of kingdoms, or the boundaries of

* Virgil, with great conciseness, and equal propriety, describes the cucumber—

——————— Tortusque per herbam
Cresceret in ventrem cucumis.——— *Georg. IV.*

Milton has (if we admit Dr. Bentley's alteration, which is, I think, in this place, unquestionably just) almost translated the Latin poet,

——————— Forth crept
The swelling gourd—— *Par. Lost*, B. VIII. 320.

† Hic rarum tamen in dumis olus, albaque circum
Lilia, verbenasque premens, vescumque papaver,
Regum æquabat opes animis: serâque revertens
Nocte domum, dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis.
Virg. Georg. IV.

nature. Bare and deformed as their surface may appear, their bowels are fraught with inward treasures! Treasures lodged fast in the quarries, or sunk deep in the mines: from thence, industry may draw her implements to plough the soil, to reap the grain, and procure every necessary convenience: from thence, art may fetch her materials to rear the dome, to swell the organ, and form the noblest ornaments of politer life.

On another side, the great deep terminates the view. There go the ships; there is that leviathan; and there, in that world of waters, an inconceivable number of animals have their habitation. This is the capacious cistern of the universe, which admits, as into a receptacle, and distributes, as from a reservoir, whatever waters the whole globe. There is not a fountain that gushes in the unfrequented desert, nor a rivulet that flows in the remotest continent, nor a cloud that swims in the highest regions of the firmament, but is fed by this all-replenishing source. The ocean is the grand vehicle of trade, and the uniter of distant nations. To us it is peculiarly kind, not only as it wafts into our ports the harvest of every climate, and renders our island the centre of traffic, but also as it secures us from foreign invasions, by a sort of impregnable intrenchment.*

Methinks the view of this profuse munificence inspires a secret delight, and kindles a disinterested good-will. While the "little hills clap their hands,"

* Whose rampart was the sea.—*Nahum* iii. 8.

I hope this little excursion into the country will not be looked upon as a departure from my subject; because a rural view, though no essential part of a garden, is yet a desirable appendage, and necessary to complete its beauty. As usefulness is the most valuable property which can attend any production, this is the circumstance chiefly touched upon in the survey of the landscape. Though every piece of this extensive and diversified scene is cast in the most elegant mould, yet nothing is calculated merely for show and parade. You see nothing formed in the taste of the ostentatious obelisk, or insignificant pomp of the pyramid. No such idle expenses were admitted into that consummate plan which regulated the structure of the universe. All the decorations of nature are no less advantageous than ornamental, such as speak the Maker infinitely beneficent as well as incomparably magnificent.

and the luxuriant "valleys laugh and sing," who can forbear catching the general joy? Who is not touched with lively sensations of pleasure? While the everlasting Father is scattering blessings through his whole family, and crowning the year with his goodness, who does not feel his breast overflowing with a diffusive benevolence? My heart, I must confess, beats high with satisfaction, and breathes out congratulatory wishes upon all the tenants of these rural abodes: "Peace be within your walls, as well as plenteousness around your dwellings." Live, ye highly-favoured; live sensible of your benefits, and thankful to your Benefactor. Look round upon these prodigiously large incomes of the fruitful soil, and call them (for you have free leave) all your own; only let me remind you of one very important truth: let me suggest, and may you never forget, that you are obliged to Christ Jesus for every one of these accommodations, which spring from the teeming earth and the smiling skies.

1. Christ made them, when they were not*—He fetched them from utter darkness, and gave them both their being and their beauty. He created the materials of which they are composed, and moulded them into this endless multiplicity of amiable forms, and useful

* When I ascribe the work of creation to the Son, I would by no means be supposed to withhold the same honour from the eternal Father, and ever-blessed Spirit. The acts of those inconceivably glorious persons are, like their essence, undivided and one. But I choose to state the point in this manner, because this is the manifest doctrine of the New Testament; is the express belief of our Church, and a most noble peculiarity of the gospel revelation.—I choose it also, because I would take every opportunity of inculcating and celebrating the divinity of the Redeemer. A truth, which imparts an unutterable dignity to Christianity: a truth, which lays an immoveable foundation for all the comfortable hopes of a Christian: a truth, which will render the mystery of our redemption the wonder and delight of eternity: and with this truth, every one will observe, my assertion is inseparably connected.

If any one questions whether this be the doctrine of our church, let the Creed, which we repeat in our most solemn devotions, determine his doubt: "I believe," says that form of sound words, "in one Lord Jesus Christ, very God of very God, by whom all things were made."—If it be farther inquired, From whence the Nicene fathers derived this article of their faith? I answer, From the writings of the beloved disciple, who lay on the Saviour's bosom; and of that great apostle, who had been caught up into the third heaven.—John i. 3. Coloss. i. 16.

substances. He arrayed the heavens with a vesture of the mildest blue, and clothed the earth in a livery of the gayest green. His pencil streaked, and his breath perfumed, whatever is beautiful or fragrant in the universe. His strength set fast the mountains; his goodness garnished the vales; and the same touch which healed the leper, wrought the whole visible system into this complete perfection.

2. Christ recovered them, when they were forfeited.—By Adam's sin, we lost our right to the comforts of life, and fruits of the ground; his disobedience was the most impious and horrid treason against the King of kings. Consequently, his whole patrimony became confiscated: as well the portion of temporal good things, settled upon the human race during their minority, as that everlasting heritage reserved for their enjoyment, when they should come to full age. But the "seed of the woman," instantly interposing, took off the attainder, and redeemed the alienated inheritance. The first Adam being disinherited, the second Adam* was appointed heir of all things, visible as well as invisible; and we hold our possession of the former, we expect an instatement in the latter, purely by virtue of our alliance to Him, and our union with Him.

3. Christ upholds them, which would otherwise tumble into ruin.—By Him, says the oracle of inspira-

* Heb. i. 2.—In this sense, at least, Christ is the Saviour of all men. The former and latter rain; the precious fruits of the earth; food to eat, and raiment to put on;—all these he purchased, even for his irreclaimable enemies. They eat of his bread, who lift up their heel against him.

We learn from hence, in what a peculiar and endearing light the Christian is to contemplate the things that are seen. Heathens might discover an eternal power, and infinite wisdom, in the structure of the universe; heathens might acknowledge a most stupendous liberality, in the unreserved grant of the whole fabric, with all its furniture, to the service of man; but the Christian should ever keep in mind his forfeiture of them, and the price paid to redeem them. He should receive the gifts of indulgent Providence, as the Israelites received their law, from the hand of a Mediator. Or rather, to Him they should come, not only issuing from the stores of an unbounded bounty, but swimming (as it were) in that crimson tide, which streamed from Immanuel's veins.

tion, all things consist.* His finger rolls the seasons round, and presides over all the celestial revolutions. His finger winds up the wheels, and impels every spring of vegetative nature. In a word, the whole weight of the creation rests upon his mighty arm; and receives the whole harmony of its motion from his unerring eye.—This habitable globe, with all its rich appendages and fine machinery, could no more continue, than they could create themselves; start they would into instant confusion, or drop into their primitive nothing, did not his power support, and his wisdom regulate them every moment. In conformity to his will, they subsist steadfast and invariable in their orders; and wait only for his sovereign nod, to "fall away like water that runneth apace."

4. Christ† actuates them, which would otherwise be lifeless and insignificant.—Pensioners they are, constant pensioners, on his bounty; and borrow their all from his fulness: He only has life; and whatever operates, operates by an emanation from his all-sufficiency. Does the grape refresh you with its enlivening juices? It is by a warrant received, and virtue derived, from the Redeemer. Does bread strengthen your heart, and prove the staff of your life? Remember that it is by the Saviour's appointment, and through the efficacy of his operation. You are charmed with his melody, when "the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the nightingale is heard in your land." You taste his goodness in the luscious fig, the melting

* Col. i. 17.—I beg leave to subjoin St. Chrysostom's pertinent and beautiful note upon the passage; by which it will appear, that the sentiment of these sections is not merely a private opinion, but the avowed belief of the primitive church. Τίδεν, says the eloquent father, ως αυτου χρειαζει η παντων υποστασις· η μονον αυτος αυτα εκ του μη ονθς ως το ειναι παρηγαγεν, αλλα και αυτος αυτα συνεχειν νυν· ως αν αποστασειεν της αυτα προνοιας, απωλυτο και διαφθαρειεν.

† John v. 17. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work: or I exert that unremitting and unwearied energy, which is the life of the creation.—Thus the words are paraphrased by a masterly expositor, who has illustrated the Life of our blessed Lord, in the most elegant taste of criticism; with the most amiable spirit of devotion, and without any mixture of the malignant leaven, or low singularities of a party.—See the Family Expositor, Vol. I. sect. 47.

peach, and the musky flavour of the apricot. You smell his sweetness in the opening honeysuckle, and every odoriferous shrub.

Could these creatures speak for themselves, they would doubtless disclaim all sufficiency of their own, and ascribe the whole honour to their Maker.—"We are servants," would they say, "of Him, who died for you. Cisterns only, dry cisterns in ourselves, we transmit to mortals no more than the uncreated fountain transfuses into us. Think not that from any ability of our own, we furnish you with assistance, or administer to your comfort. 'Tis the divine energy, the divine energy alone, that works in us, and does you good.—We serve you, O ye sons of men, that you may love him, who placed us in these stations. O! love the Lord, therefore, all ye who are supported by our ministry; or else we shall groan with indignation and regret at your abuse of our services.*—Use us and welcome; for we are yours, if ye are Christ's. Crop our choicest beauties, rifle all our treasures, accommodate yourselves with our most valuable qualities; only let us be incentives to your gratitude, and motives to your obedience."

Having surveyed the spacious sky, and sent a glance round the inferior creation, it is time to descend from this eminence, and confine my attention to the beautiful spot below—Here nature, always pleasing, every where lovely, appears with peculiar attractions. Yonder, she seems dressed in her deshabille; grand, but irregular. Here she calls in her hand-maid art, and shines in all the delicate ornaments which the nicest cultivation is able to convey; those are her common apartments, where she lodges her ordinary guests; this is her cabinet of curiosities, where she entertains her intimate acquaintance.—My eye shall often expatiate over those scenes of universal fertility: my feet shall sometimes brush through the thicket, or traverse the lawn, or stroll along the forest glade: but to this

* Rom. viii. 12.

delightful retreat shall be my chief resort. Thither will I make excursions; but here will I dwell.

If from my low procedure, I may form an allusion to the most exalted practices, I would observe upon this occasion, that the celebrated Erasmus, and our judicious Locke, having trod the circle of the sciences, and ranged through the whole extent of human literature, at length betook themselves solely to the Bible. Leaving the sages of antiquity, they sat incessantly at the feet of Jesus. Wisely they withdrew from that immense multiplicity of learning, from those endless tracts of amusing erudition, where noxious weeds are mixed with wholesome herbs; where is generally a much larger growth of prickly shrubs, than of fruitful boughs. They spent their most mature hours in those hallowed gardens, which God's own wisdom planted; which God's own spirit watereth; and in which God's own Son is continually walking. Where he meeteth those that seek him, and revealeth to them the glories of his person, and the riches of his goodness.

Thus would I finish the remainder of my days! Having just tasted (what they call) the politer studies, I would now devote my whole application to the lively oracles. From other pursuits, I might glean, perhaps, a few scattered fragments of low, of lean, of unsatisfactory instruction; from this, I trust to reap a harvest of the sublimest truths, the noblest improvements, and the purest joys.*—Waft me then, O! waft my mind to Sion's consecrated bowers. Let my thoughts perpetually rove through the awfully-pleasing walks of inspiration. Here grow those heaven-born plants, the trees of life and knowledge, whose ambrosial fruits we now may "take and eat, and live for ever." Here flow those precious streams of grace and righteousness, whose living waters "whosoever drinks shall thirst no more." And what can the fables of Grecian song, or the finest pages of Roman eloquence—what can they

* Quicquid docetur, veritas; quicquid præcipitur, bonitas; quicquid promittitur, felicitas.

exhibit, in any degree, comparable to these matchless prerogatives of revelation?—Therefore, though I should not dislike to pay a visit now and then to my heathen masters, I would live with the prophets and apostles. With those, I would carry on some occasional correspondence; but these should be my bosom-friends, my inseparable companions, "my delight, and my counsellors."

What sweets are these, which so agreeably salute my nostrils? They are the breath of the flowers, the incense of the garden. How liberally does the jasmine dispense her odoriferous riches? How deliciously has the woodbine embalmed this morning walk? The air is all perfume.—And is not this another most engaging argument, to forsake the bed of sloth? Who would lie dissolved in senseless slumbers, while so many breathing sweets invite him to a feast of fragrancy? Especially considering, that the advancing day will exhale the volatile dainties. A fugitive treat they are, prepared only for the wakeful and industrious; whereas, when the sluggard lifts his heavy eyes, the flowers will droop; their fine scents be dissipated, and instead of this refreshing humidity, the air will become a kind of liquid fire.

With this very motive, heightened by a representation of the most charming pieces of morning scenery, the parent of mankind awakes his lovely consort. There is such a delicacy in the choice, and so much life in the description of these rural images, that I cannot excuse myself, without repeating the whole passage.—Whisper it, some friendly genius, in the ear of every one, who is now sunk in sleep, and lost to all these refined gratifications!

> Awake: the morning shines, and the fresh field
> Calls you: ye lose the prime, to mark how spring
> The tended plants, how blows the citron grove;
> What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed;
> How nature paints her colours; how the bee
> Sits on the bloom, extracting liquid sweets.
>
> *Milt. Par. Lost*, B. V. l. 90.

How delightful is this fragrance! It is distributed in the nicest proportion; neither so strong as to oppress the organs, nor so faint as to elude them. We are soon cloyed at a sumptuous banquet, but this pleasure never loses its poignancy, never palls the appetite.—Here luxury itself is innocent; or rather, in this case, indulgence is incapable of excess.—This balmy entertainment, not only regales the sense, but cheers the very soul;* and instead of clogging, elates its powers.—It puts me in mind of that ever-memorable sacrifice, which was once made in behalf of offending mortals. I mean the sacrifice of the blessed Jesus; when he offered up himself to God, "for a sweet-smelling savour." Such the Holy Spirit styles that wonderful oblation: as if no image in the whole sensible creation was so proper to give us an idea of the ineffable satisfaction, which the Father of mercies conceived from that unparralleled atonement,—as the pleasing sensations which such rich perfumes are capable of raising. "Thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil," from an apostate world—the most submissive acknowledgments, added to the most costly offerings, from men of defiled hands and unclean lips—what could they have effected? A prophet represents the "high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity," turning himself away from such filthy rags, turning himself away with a disdainful abhorrence,† as from the noisome steams of a dunghil.—But in Christ's immaculate holiness, in Christ's consummate obedience, in Christ's most precious blood-shedding, with what unimaginable complacency does justice rest satisfied, and vengeance acquiesce!—All thy works, O thou surety for ruined sinners! all thy sufferings, O thou slaughtered Lamb of God! as well as all thy garments, O thou bridegroom of thy church! smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia!‡ They are infinitely more grateful to the eternal Godhead, than the choicest exhalations of the

* Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart.—*Prov.* xxvii. 9.
† Amos v. 21, 22. ‡ Psalm xlv. 8.

garden, than all the odours of the spicy East can be to the human nostrils.

As the altar of old sanctified the gift, so this is the great propitiation which recommends the obnoxious persons, and unprofitable services of the believing world. In this, may my soul be interested! By this, may it be reconciled to the Father!—There is such a leprous depravity cleaving to my nature, as pollutes whatever I perform. My most profound adorations, and sincerest acts of religion, must not presume to challenge a reward, but humbly implore forgiveness.* Renouncing, therefore, myself in every instance of duty, disclaiming all shadow of confidence in any deeds of my own,† may I now, and evermore, be accepted through the Beloved!

What colours, what charming colours, are here! These, so nobly bold, and those, so delicately languid. What a glow is enkindled in some! what a gloss shines upon others! In one, methinks, I see the ruby with her bleeding radiance; in another, the sapphire with her sky-tinctured blue; in all, such an exquisite richness of dies, as no other set of paintings in the universe can boast.‡—With what a masterly skill is

* A writer of distinguished superiority, thus addresses the great Observer of Actions and Searcher of Hearts, and vindicates my sentiments, while he so justly and beautifully utters his own;

Look down, great God, with pity's softest eye,
On a poor breathing particle in dust.
His crimes forgive; forgive his virtues too,
Those smaller faults, half converts to the right.
Night-Thoughts, No. XI.

† See page 44 and 45 in the second edition of a most candid and evangelical little treatise, called Christianity the Great Ornament of Human Life.—"If Christians happily avoid the dangerous extreme, and too often fatal rock of a dead, fruitless faith on the one hand, i.e (i. e. Satan) will endeavour, by all kind of plausible insinuations, to split them on the opposite, viz. spiritual pride, ostentation, and dependence on their works, as if these were the meritorious, or procuring cause of all true peace, hope, consolation, and divine acceptance.—Now this self-dependence may be ranked among the most dangerous of the infernal politics, because the fatal poison lies deep, and too often undiscerned."

‡ ———— Who can paint
Like Nature? Can imagination boast.

every one of the varying tints disposed! Here, they seem to be thrown on with an easy dash of security and freedom; there, they are adjusted by the nicest touches of art and accuracy. Those which form the ground, are always so judiciously chosen, as to heighten the lustre of the superadded figures; while the verdure of the impalement, or the shadings of the foliage, impart new liveliness to the whole. Indeed, whether they are blended or arranged, softened or contrasted, they are manifestly under the conduct of a taste that never mistakes; a felicity that never falls short of the very perfection of elegance. Fine, inimitably fine, is the texture of the web, on which these shining treasures are displayed. What are the labours of the Persian looms, or the boasted commodities of Brussels, compared with these curious manufactories of nature? Compared with these, the most admired chintses lose their reputation; even superfine cambrics appear coarse as canvass in their presence.

What a cheering argument does our Saviour derive from hence, to strengthen our affiance in God! He directs us to learn a lesson of heaven-depending faith, from every bird that wings the air; and from every flower that blossoms in the field. If Providence, with unremitted care, supports those inferior creatures, and arrays these insensible beings with so much splendour, surely He will in nowise withhold from his elect children "bread to eat, and raiment to put on." Ye faithful followers of the Lamb, dismiss every low anxiety relating to the needful sustenance of life. He that feeds the ravens from an inexhaustible magazine; He that paints the plants with such surpassing elegance; in short, He that provides so liberally both for the animal and vegetable parts of his creation, will not, cannot, neglect his own people. Fear not, little

> Amid his gay creation, hues like these?
> And can he mix them with that matchless skill,
> And lay them on so delicately fine,
> And lose them in each other, as appears
> In ev'ry bud that blows?— *Thoms.* Spring.

flock, ye peculiar objects of Almighty love! it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom.* And, if he freely gives you an everlasting kingdom hereafter, is it possible to suppose that he will deny you any necessary conveniencies here?

One cannot forbear reflecting, in this place, on the too prevailing humour of being fond and ostentatious of dress.† What an object and mistaken ambition is this!—How unworthy the dignity of immortal, and the wisdom of rational beings! especially, since these little productions of the earth have indisputably the pre-eminence in such outward embellishments.—Go, clothe thyself with purple and fine linen; trick thy-

* Luke xii. 32.

† Mr. Addison has a fine remark on a female warrior, celebrated by Virgil. He observes, that with all her other great qualities, this little foible mingled itself. Because, as the poet relates, an intemperate fondness for a rich and splendid suit of armour, betrayed her into ruin. In this circumstance, our critic discovers a moral concealed; this he admires, as a neat, though oblique satire, on that trifling passion.—*Spect.* Vol. I. No. 15.

I would refer it to the judicious reader, whether there is not a beauty of the same kind, but touched with a more masterly hand, in the Song of Deborah.—Speaking of Sisera's mother, the sacred eucharistic ode represents her as anticipating, in her fond fancy, the victory of her son; and indulging the following soliloquy:—Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey? To Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work; of divers colours of needle-work on both sides; meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?—She takes no notice of the signal service which her hero would do to his country, by quelling so dangerous an insurrection. She never reflects on the present acclamations, the future advancement, and the eternal renown, which are the tributes usually paid to a conqueror's merit. She can conceive, it seems, nothing greater than to be clad in an embroidered vesture; and to trail along the ground, a robe of the richest dies. This is, in her imagination, the most lordly spoil he can win; the most stately trophy he can erect.—It is also observable, how she dwells upon the trivial circumstance; reiterating it again and again. It has so charmed her ignoble heart, so entirely ingrossed her little views, that she can think of nothing else, speak of nothing else, and can hardly ever desist from the darling topic.—Is not this a keen, though delicately couched censure, on that poor, contemptible, groveling taste, which is enamoured with silken finery, and makes the attributes of a butterfly the idol of its affections?

How conspicuous is the elevated and magnificent spirit of that venerable mother in Israel, when viewed in comparison with the low, the despicable turn of this Canaanitish lady!—Such strong and beautiful contrasts are, I think, some of the most striking excellencies of poetic painting; and in no book are they more frequently used, or expressed with greater life, than in the sacred volumes of inspiration.

self up in all the gay attire which the shuttle or the needle can furnish; yet know, to the mortification of thy vanity, that the native elegance of a common daisy* eclipses all this elaborate finery.—Nay, wert thou decked like some illustrious princess on her coronation-day, in all the splendour of royal apparel; couldst thou equal even Solomon in the height of his magnificence and glory, yet would the meanest among the flowery populace outshine thee. Every discerning eye would give the preference to these beauties of the ground.† Scorn then to borrow thy recommendations from a neat disposition of threads, and a curious arrangement of colours. Assume a becoming greatness of temper: let thy endowments be of the immortal kind: study to be all-glorious within: be clothed with humility: wear the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;‡ to say all in a word, put on the Lord Jesus Christ;§ let his blood be sprinkled upon thy conscience, and it shall be whiter than the virgin snows. Let his righteousness, like a spotless robe, adorn thy inner man; and thou shalt be amiable even in the most distinguishing eye of God. Let his blessed spirit dwell in thy heart; and, under his sanctifying operations, thou shalt be made partaker of a divine nature.

These are real excellencies; truly noble accomplishments these. In this manner be arrayed, be beautified; and thou wilt not find a rival in the feathers of a peacock, or the foliation of a tulip. These will exalt thee far above the low pretensions of lace and embroidery.

* Peaceful and lowly in their native soil,
They neither know to spin, nor care to toil;
Yet with confess'd magnificence deride
Our mean attire, and impotence of pride. *Prior.*

† Mr. Cowley, with his usual brilliancy of imagination, styles them stars of earth.

‡ How beautifully does the prophet describe the furniture of a renewed and heavenly mind, under the similitude of a rich and complete suit of apparel! I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.—*Isai.* lxi. 10.

§ Rom. xiii. 14.

These will prepare thee to stand in the beatific presence, and to take thy seat among the angels of light.

What an enchanting situation is this! One can scarce be melancholy within the atmosphere of flowers. Such lively hues, and delicious odours, not only address themselves agreeably to the senses, but touch, with a surprising delicacy, the sweetest movements of the mind.

——To the heart inspiring
Vernal delight and joy.* *Milt.* B. IV.

How often have I felt them dissipate the gloom of thought, and transfuse a sudden gayety through the dejected spirit! I cannot wonder that kings descend from their thrones, to walk amidst blooming ivory and gold; or retire from the most sumptuous feast, to be recreated with the more refined sweets of the garden. I cannot wonder that queens forego, for a while, the compliments of a nation, to receive the tribute of the parterre; or withdraw from all the glitter of a court, to be attended with the more splendid equipage of a bed of flowers. But if this be so pleasing, what transporting pleasure must arise from the fruition of uncreated excellency! O! what unknown delight, to enter into thy immediate presence, most blessed Lord God! To see Thee,† thou King of heaven, and Lord of

* "I would have my reader endeavour to moralize this natural pleasure of the soul, and to improve this vernal delight, as Milton calls it, into a Christian virtue. When we find ourselves inspired with this pleasing instinct, this secret satisfaction and complacency, arising from the beauties of the creation, let us consider to whom we stand indebted for all these entertainments of sense; and who it is that thus opens his hand, and fills the world with good.—Such an habitual disposition of mind consecrates every field and wood; turns an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice; and will improve those transient gleams which naturally brighten up and refresh the soul on such occasions, into an inviolable and perpetual state of bliss and happiness.—*Spect.* Vol. V. No. 394.

† Isaiah represents the felicity of the righteous, in the everlasting world, by this elegant and amiable image; "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty."—Milton touches the same subject with wonderful elevation and majesty of thought:

——They walk with God,
High in salvation, and the climes of bliss;

Words, which, like the fiery car, almost transport our affections to those glorious abodes.—*Isai.* xxxiii. 17. *Milt.* B. XI. v. 707.

glory, no longer "through a glass darkly, but face to face!" To have all thy goodness, all thy greatness, shine before us; and be made glad for ever with the brightest discovery of thy perfections, with the ineffable joy of thy countenance!

This we cannot bear in our present imperfect state. The effulgence of unveiled divinity, would dazzle a mortal sight. Our feeble faculties would be overwhelmed with such a fulness of superabundant bliss, and must lie oppressed under such an exceeding great eternal weight of glory. But, when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, the powers of the soul will be greatly invigorated; and these earthly tabernacles will be transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. Then, though "the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed,"* when the Lord of Hosts is revealed from heaven, yet shall his faithful people be enabled to see him as he is.†

Here then, my wishes, here be fixed. Be this your determined and invariable aim.—Here, my affections, here give a loose to your whole ardour. Cry out, in the language of inspiration, This one thing have I desired of the Lord, which, with incessant earnestness I will require; that I may dwell in the celestial house of the Lord all the days of my future life; to behold the fair beauty of the Lord,‡ and to contemplate with wonder and adoration—with unspeakable and everlasting rapture—all the attributes of the incomprehensible Godhead.

Solomon, a most penetrating judge of human nature, knowing how highly mankind is charmed with the fine qualities of flowers, has figured out the blessed Jesus, that "fairest among ten thousand," by these lovely representatives. He styles him The rose of Sharon,§

* Isai. xxiv. 23. † 1 John iii. 2.
‡ Psal. xxvii. 4. § Cant. ii. 1.

Malus ut arboribus decori est, ut vitibus uva,
Utque rosæ campis, ut lilia vallibus alba,
Sic Christus decus omne suis.—

and The lily of the valleys;* like the first, full of delights and communicable graces; like the last, exalted in majesty, and complete in beauty.—In that sacred pastoral he ranges the creation, borrows its most finished forms, and dips his pencil in its choicest dies, to present us with a sketch of the amiableness of his person. His amiableness, who is the light of the world; the glory of his church; the only hope, the sovereign consolation of sinners; and exalted, infinitely exalted, not only above the sublimest comparison, but even "above all blessing and praise."—May I also make the same heavenly use of all sublunary enjoyments! Whatever is pleasurable or charming below, let it raise my desire to those delectable objects which are above; which will yield, not partial, but perfect felicity; not transient, but never-ending satisfaction and joy.—Yes, my soul, let these beauties in miniature always remind thee of that glorious person, in whom "dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily." Let these little emanations teach thee to thirst after the eternal fountain. O! may the creatures be thy constant clue to the Creator! for this is a certain truth, and deserves thy frequent recollection, demands thy most attentive consideration; that the whole compass of finite perfection is only a faint ray,† shot from that immense source—is only a small drop, derived from that inexhaustible ocean of all good.

What a surprising variety is observable among the

* By the lily of the valleys, I apprehend is meant, not the flower which commonly passes under that denomination, and is comparatively mean, but the grand majestic garden lily, growing in a rich irriguous soil, where it flourishes in the most ample manner, and arrives at the highest perfection. The circumstance of the valleys, added by the sacred writer, is significant not of the species, but of the place.—This is by far the noblest interpretation, and most exactly suitable to the spiritual sense; which intimates, That the blessed Jesus delights to dwell, by the communications of his spirit, in humble hearts.—בשושנים רועה Lilium vallibus gaudens.

† Thou sitt'st above all heav'ns,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and pow'r divine.—*Milt.* B. v.

flowery tribes! How has the bountiful hand of Providence diversified these nicest pieces of his workmanship? added the charms of an endless novelty to all their other perfections!—A constant uniformity would soon render the entertainment tiresome or insipid; therefore, every species is formed on a separate plan, and exhibits something entirely new. The fashion spreads not from family to family; but every one has a mode of its own, which is truly original. The most cursory glance perceives an apparent difference, as well as a peculiar delicacy in the airs and habits, the attitude and lineaments, of every distinct class.

Some rear their heads with a majestic mien, and overlook, like sovereigns or nobles, the whole parterre. Others seem more moderate in their aims, and advance only to the middle stations; a genius turned for heraldry, might term them, The Gentry of the border; while others, free from all aspiring views, creep unambitiously on the ground, and look like the commonalty of the kind.—Some are intersected with elegant stripes, or studded with radiant spots. Some affect to be genteelly powdered, or neatly fringed; while others are plain in their aspect, unaffected in their dress, and content to please with a naked simplicity. Some assume the monarch's purple; some look most becoming in the virgin's white; but black, doleful black, has no admittance into the wardrobe of spring. The weeds of mourning would be a manifest indecorum, when nature holds an universal festival. She would now inspire none but delightful ideas, and therefore always makes her appearance in some amiable suit.* —Here stands a warrior, clad with crimson; there sits a magistrate, robed in scarlet; and yonder struts a pretty fellow, that seems to have dipped his plumes in the rainbow, and glitters in all the gay colours of that resplendent arch. Some rise into a curious cup, or fall into a set of beautiful bells. Some spread themselves in a swelling tuft, or crowd into a delicious

* —Nunc formosissimus annus.—*Virg.*

cluster.—In some, the predominant satin softens by the gentlest diminutions, till it has even stole away from itself. The eye is amused at the agreeable delusion, and we wonder to find ourselves insensibly decoyed into a quite different lustre. In others, you would think the fine tinges were emulous of pre-eminence. Disdaining to mingle, they confront one another with the resolution of rivals, determined to dispute the prize of beauty; while each is improved by the opposition, into the highest vivacity of complexion.

How manifold are thy works,* O Lord! Multiplied even to a prodigy. Yet in wisdom, consummate wisdom, hast thou made them all.—How I admire the vastness of the contrivance, and the exactness of the execution! Man, feeble man, with difficulty accomplishes a single work: hardly, and after many efforts, does he arrive at a tolerable imitation of some one production of nature. But, the Almighty artist spoke millions of substances into instantaneous being; the whole collection wonderfully various; and each individual completely perfect. Repeated experiments generally, I might say always, discover errors or defects in our happiest inventions. Nay, what wins our approbation at the present hour, or in this particular place, is very probably, in some remote period, or some distant clime, treated with contempt. Whereas, these fine structures have pleased every taste, in every country, for almost six thousand years. Nor has any fault† been detected in the original plan, nor any room left for the least improvement from the first model.—All our performances, the more minutely they are scanned, the more imperfect they appear. With regard to these delicate objects, the more we search into their properties, the more we are ravished with their graces. They are sure to disclose fresh strokes of the most masterly skill, in

* Psalm civ. 24.

† Eccles. iii. 14. I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it.

proportion to the attention with which they are examined.

Nor is the simplicity of the operation less astonishing, than the accuracy of the workmanship, or the infinitude of the effects. Should you ask, "Where, and what are the materials which beautify the blooming world? What rich tints, what splendid dies, what stores of shining crayons, stand by the heavenly limner, when he paints the robe of nature?" 'Tis answered, His powerful pencil needs no such costly apparatus. A single principle under his conducting hand branches out into an immensity of the most varied and most finished forms. The moisture of the earth and of the circumambient air, passed through proper strainers, and disposed in a range of pellucid tubes: this performs all the wonders, and produces all the beauties, of vegetation. This creeps along the fibres of the low-spread moss, and climbs to the very tops of the lofty-waving cedars. This, attracted by the root, and circulating through invisible canals; this bursts into gems, expands itself into leaves, and clothes the forest with all its verdant honours.—This one plain and simple cause* gives birth to all the charms which deck the youth and maturity of the year; this blushes in the early hepatica, and flames in the late advancing poppy; this reddens into blood in the veins of the mulberry, and attenuates itself into leafen gold to create a covering for the quince; this breathes in all the fragrant gales of our garden, and weeps odorous gum in the groves of Arabia.—So wonderful is our Creator in counsel, and so excellent in working!†

In a grove of tulips or a knot of pinks, one perceives a difference in almost every individual. Scarce any two are turned and tinctured exactly alike. Each allows

* "When every several effect has a particular separate cause, this gives no pleasure to the spectator, as not discovering contrivance. But that work is beheld with admiration and delight, as the result of deep counsel, which is complicated in its parts, and yet simple in its operations: where a great variety of effects are seen to arise from one principle operating uniformly."—*Abernethy on the Attributes.*

† Isai. xxviii. 29.

himself a little particularity in his dress, though all belong to one family; so that they are various, and yet the same.—A pretty emblem this, of the smaller differences between protestant Christians. There are modes in religion which admit of variation, without prejudice to sound faith, or real holiness. Just as the drapery on these pictures of the spring may be formed after a variety of patterns, without blemishing their beauty, or altering their nature.—Be it so then, that in some points of inconsiderable consequence, several of our brethren dissent; yet, let us all live amicably and sociably together, for we harmonize in principals, though we vary in punctilios. Let us join in conversation, and intermingle interests; discover no estrangement of behaviour, and cherish no alienation of affection. If any strife subsists, let it be to follow our divine master most closely, in humility of heart, and unblameableness of life: let it be to serve one another most readily, in all the kind offices of a cordial friendship. Thus shall we be united, though distinguished; united in the same grand fundamentals, though distinguished by some small circumstantials; united in one important bond of brotherly love, though distinguished by some slighter peculiarities of sentiment.

Between Christians, whose judgments disagree only about a form of prayer, or manner of worship, I apprehend there is no more essential difference, than between flowers which bloom from the same kind of seed, but happen to be somewhat diversified in the mixture of their colours.—Whereas, if one denies the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and degrades the incarnate God to the meanness of a mere creature; if another cries up the worthiness of human works, and depreciates the alone-meritorious righteousness of the glorious Mediator; if a third addresses the incommunicable honours to a finite being, and bows to the image, or preys to the saint—these are errors, extremely derogatory to the Redeemer's dignity, and not a little prejudicial to the comfort of his people: against these

to remonstrate, against these to urge every argument, and use every dissuasive, bespeaks not the censorious bigot, but the friend of truth, and the lover of mankind:—whereas, to stand neuter and silent, while such principles are propagated, would be an instance of criminal remissness, rather than of Christian moderation.—For persons who espouse such persuasions as the former, and habituate themselves to such practices as the latter, we will not fail to maintain a tender compassions: we will not cease to put up earnest intercessions: we will also acknowledge and love whatever is excellent and amiable in their character. Yet we dare not subscribe their creed; we cannot remit our assiduous, but kind endeavours; if by any means we may reconcile them to a more scriptural belief, and a purer worship.*

Another circumstance, recommending and endearing the flowery creation, is their regular succession. They make not their appearance all at once, but in an orderly rotation. While a proper number of these obliging retainers are in waiting, the others abscond; but hold themselves in a posture of service, ready to take their turn, and fill each his respective station the instant it becomes vacant.—The snowdrop, foremost of the lovely train, breaks her way through the frozen soil, in order to present her early compliments to her Lord. Dressed in the robe of innocency, she steps forth, fearless of danger, long before the trees have ventured to unfold their leaves, even while the icicles are pendent on our houses.—Next peeps out the crocus, but cautiously, and with an air of timidity. She hears the howling blasts, and skulks close to her

* In some former editions, I expressed myself on this point, unwarily and harshly. But my meaning and real sentiments were no other than those represented above.—The reader, from such unguarded intimations, might too naturally be led to conclude, That the author avows, and would stir up, a spirit of persecution. But this is a method of dealing with opponents in religious doctrines, which he disclaims as absurd, and abhors as iniquitous. He is for no force but that of rational conviction, for no constraint but that of affectionate persuasion.—Thus, if you please, compel them to come in. *Luke* xiv. 23.

low situation. Afraid she seems to make large excursions from her root, while so many ruffian winds are abroad, and scouring along the æther.—Nor is the violet last in this shining embassy of the year; which, with all the embellishments that would grace a royal garden, condescends to line our hedges, and grow at the feet of briers. Freely, and without any solicitation, she distributes the bounty of her emissive sweets; while herself, with an exemplary humility, retires from sight, seeking rather to administer pleasure, than to win admiration.* Emblem, expressive emblem of those modest virtues, which delight to bloom in obscurity; which extend a cheering influence to multitudes, who are scarce acquainted with the source of their comforts! Motive, engaging motive, to that ever-active beneficence, which stays not for the importunity of the distressed, but anticipates their suit, and prevents them with the blessings of its goodness!—The poor polyanthus, that lately adorned the border with her sparkling beauties, and, transplanted into our windows, gave us a fresh entertainment, is now no more. I saw her complexion fade, I perceived her breath decay, till at length she expired, and dropt into her grave.—Scarce have we sustained this loss, but in comes the auricula, and more than retrieves it. Arrayed she comes, in a splendid variety of amiable forms, with an eye of crystal, and garments of the most glossy sattin; exhaling perfume, and powdered with silver. A very distinguished procession this! The favourite care of the florist! Scarce one among them but is dignified with a character of renown, or has the honour to represent some celebrated toast. But these also, notwithstanding their illustrious titles, have exhausted their whole stock of fragrance, and are mingled with the meanest dust.—Who could forbear grieving at their departure, did not the tulips begin to raise themselves on their fine wands, or stately stalks? They flush the parterre with one of the gayest dresses that blooming nature wears. Did ever beau or belle make so gaudy

* Prodesse quàm conspici.

an appearance in a birth-night suit? Here one may behold the innocent wantonness of beauty: here she indulges a thousand freaks, and sports herself in the most charming diversity of colours. Yet I should wrong her were I to call her a coquette, because she plays her lovely changes, not to enkindle dissolute affections, but to display her Creator's glory.—Soon arises the anemone, encircled at the bottom with a spreading robe, and rounded at the top into a beautiful dome. In its loosely-flowing mantle you may observe a noble negligence, in its gently-bending tufts the nicest symmetry. I would term it the fine gentleman of the garden, because it seems to have learnt the singular address of uniting simplicity with refinement, of reconciling art and ease.—The same month has the merit of producing the ranunculus. All bold and graceful, it expands the riches of its foliage, and acquires by degrees the loveliest enamel in the world. As persons of intrinsic worth disdain the superficial arts of recommendation practised by fops, so this lordly flower scorns to borrow any of its excellence from powders and essences. It needs no such attractives to render it the darling of the curious, being sufficiently engaging from the elegance of its figure, the radiant variety of its tinges, and a certain superior dignity of aspect.—Methinks nature improves in her operations. Her latest strokes are most masterly. To crown the collection, she introduces the carnation; which captivates every eye with a noble spread of graces, and charms another sense with a profusion of exquisite odours. This single flower has centered in itself the perfections of all the preceding. The moment it appears, it so commands our attention, that we scarce regret the absence of the rest.—The gilliflower, like a real friend, attends you through all the vicissitudes and alterations of the season: while others make a transient visit only, this is rather an inhabitant than a guest in our gardens—adds fidelity to complaisance.

It is in vain to attempt a catalogue of these amiable gifts. There is an endless multiplicity in their charac-

ters yet an invariable order in their approaches. Every month, almost every week, has its peculiar ornaments; not servilely copying the works of its predecessor, but forming, still forming, and still executing, some new design. So lavish is the fancy, yet so exact is the process of nature.

Here, let me stand awhile, to contemplate this distribution of flowers, through the several periods of the year.—Were they all to blossom together, there would be at once a promiscuous throng, and at once a total privation. We should scarce have an opportunity of adverting to the dainty qualities of half, and must soon lose the agreeable company of them all. But now, since every species has a separate post to occupy, and a distinct interval for appearing, we can take a leisurely and minute survey of each succeeding set. We can view and review their forms, enter into a more intimate acquaintance with their charming accomplishments, and receive all those pleasing services which they are commissioned to yield.—This remarkable piece of economy is productive of another very valuable effect. It not only places, in the most advantageous light, every particular community, but is also a sure provisionary resource against the frailty of the whole nation. Or, to speak more truly, it renders the flowery tribes a sort of immortal* corps: for, though some are continually dropping, yet, by this expedient, others are continually rising, to beautify our borders, and prolong the entertainment.

What goodness is this, to provide such a series of gratifications for mankind! Both to diversify, and perpetuate, the fine collation! To take care that our paths should be, in a manner, incessantly strewed with flowers!—And what wisdom, to bid every one of these insensible beings, know the precise juncture for their

* In allusion to the celebrated practice of the Persian kings, "who maintained for their life-guard a body of troops, called *Immortal*, because it perpetually subsisted: for as soon as any of the men died, another was immediately put into his place."

Rollin's Antient History, Vol. II,

coming forth! Insomuch that no actor on a stage can be more exact in performing his part, can make a more regular entry, or a more punctual exit.

Who emboldens the daffodil to venture abroad in February, and to trust her flowering gold with inclement and treacherous skies? Who informs the various tribes of fruit-bearing blossoms, that vernal suns, and a more genial warmth, are fittest for their delicate texture? Who teaches the clove to stay, till hotter beams are prepared, to infuse a spicy richness into her odours, and tincture her complexion with the deepest crimson?—Who disposes these beautiful troops into such orderly bodies, retarding some, and accelerating others? Who has instructed them to file off with such perfect regularity, as soon as the duty of their respective station is over? And, when one detachment retires, who gives the signal for another immediately to advance? Who, but that unerring providence, which from the highest thrones of angels, to the very lowest degrees of existence, orders all things in "number, weight, and measure!"

These, O my soul, are the regulations of that most adorable, that most beneficent Being, who bowed the heavens, came down to dwell on earth, and united the frailty of thy mortal nature to all the glories of his Godhead. All the honour of this admirable establishment belongs to thy ransom, thy surety, thy Saviour. To Him it belongs, who sustained the vengeance which thou hadst deserved, and wast doomed to suffer; who fulfilled the obedience which thou wast obliged, but unable, to perform; and who humbled himself (stupendous, ineffable loving-kindness) humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross.—He formed this vast machine, and adjusted its nice dependencies. The pillars that support it, the embellishments that adorn it, and the laws that govern it, are the result of his unsearchable counsels. O! the heights of his majesty, and the depths of his abasement!

Which shall we admire most, his essential greatness,

or his free grace? He created the exalted seraph that sings in glory, and every the minutest insect that flutters in air, or crawls in dust. He marks out a path for all those globes of light, which travel the circuit of the skies, and disdains not to rear the violet from its lowly bed, or to plait the daisy which dresses our plains. So grand are his operations, yet so condescending his regards!—If summer, like a sparkling bride, is brilliant and glorious in her apparel, what is this, but a feeble reflection of his uncreated effulgence? If autumn, like a munificent host, opens her stores, and gives us all things richly to enjoy, what is this but a little taste of his inexhaustible liberality? If thunders roar, you hear the sound of his trumpet: if lightnings glare, you see the launching of his glittering spear: if "the perpetual hills be scattered, and the everlasting mountains bowed," you behold a display—No, says the prophet, you have rather the hiding of his power.* So immense is his power, so uncontrollable and inconceivable, that

* Hab. iii. 4. Nothing can be more magnificently conceived than the imagery of this whole chapter; and upon the foot of our interpretation, nothing was ever more delicately and nobly turned, than the sentiment of this clause. Other senses of the passage, I acknowledge, may be assigned with equal propriety: but none, I think, can be imagined so majestic and sublime. As the original will fairly admit of it—as it carries no disagreement with the context, and expresses a most important, as well as undoubted truth—I hope, I may be permitted to use it, at least by way of accommodation, especially, as it suggests one of the finest mottos imaginable, wherewith to inscribe all the visible productions of the Creator's hand. When, struck with astonishment, we consider their grandeur, beauty, and consummate perfections; let us, in justice to their author, apply the exalted reflection of this sacred ode—"In all these is the hiding, rather than an adequate display, of his matchless power. Though they challenge our praise, and surpass our comprehension, yet they are by no means the utmost exertions, but rather some slighter essays, of omnipotent skill." —Milton, relating the overthrow of the fallen angels, introduces a grand circumstance, not much unlike the preceding. Messiah, unaided and alone, had routed an innumerable host of apostate spirits. This was great and marvellous. But to create a juster idea of the illustrious conqueror, our poet beautifully adds;

'Yet half his strength he put not forth.'

If we forget to make the same remark, when we contemplate God in his works, we must necessarily form very scanty conceptions of that Supreme Being, before whom all nations are as "a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance."

all these mighty works are but a sketch, in which more is concealed than discovered.

Thus, I think, we should always view the visible system, with an evangelical telescope (if I may be allowed the expression,) and with an evangelical microscope—regarding Christ Jesus as the great projector and architect, who planned, and executed, the amazing scheme. Whatever is magnificent or valuable, tremendous or amiable, should ever be ascribed to the Redeemer. This is the Christian's natural philosophy. With regard to this method of considering the things that are seen, we have an inspired apostle, for our preceptor and precedent. Speaking of Christ, he says, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands."—Did we carefully attend to this leading principle, in all our examinations of nature, it would, doubtless, be a most powerful means of enkindling our love, and strengthening our faith.* When I look round upon millions of noble substances, and carry with me

* The apostles, I observe, delight to use this method of displaying the honours of the Redeemer, and establishing the faith of his people —The beloved disciple, teaching that most precious doctrine, "of a Lamb slain to take away the sins of the world;" in order to evince the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for this blessed purpose, affirms, That all things were made by Him: and without Him was not any thing, no, not so much as one single being made, John i. 3.—St. Paul, preaching the same glad tidings to the Colossians, and expressly maintaining, that we have redemption through his blood, seems to foresee an objection of this kind. "To expiate transgressions against an infinite majesty, is a most prodigious act. It must cost vastly more than any common surety can pay, to redeem a sinful world. What reason have we to believe, that Jesus is equal to this mighty undertaking?" All possible reason, replies the apostle, from the dignity of his person, for he is the image of the invisible God; and from the greatness of his works, For by Him all things were made. Consider the operations of his hands, and you cannot doubt the atoning efficacy of his death. Col. i. 15, 16.—The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, falls exactly into the same train of arguing; declaring, that Christ Jesus has purged our sins, by the sacrifice of himself; He proves his ample ability for this tremendous office, from his essential excellence, because He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and from his admirable works, because He made the worlds, and upholdeth all things by the word of his power, Heb. i. 2. 3.—Which truth, as it is so important in itself; of such signal comfort to Christians, and so particularly insisted on by the inspired writers; I hope, I shall need no apology for an attempt to illustrate and enforce it, in a kind of evangelical descant upon Creation, annexed to these reflections.

this transporting reflection, "The Maker of them all, expired on a cross for me;" how can I remain any longer indifferent? Must not the coldest heart begin to glow with gratitude?—When I survey an immensity of the finest productions imaginable, and remember, that the author of them all is my "righteousness and my redemption;" how can I choose but repose the most cheerful confidence in such a Mediator?

Let me add one more remark, upon the admirable adjustment of every particular, relating to these fine colonies planted in the parterre.—With such accuracy and correctness is their structure finished, that any the least conceivable alteration would very much impair their perfection. Should you see, for instance, the nice disposition of the tulip's attire fly abroad, disorderly and irregular, like the flaunting woodbine—should the jessamine rear her diminutive head, on those grand columns which support the hollihock—should the erect and manly aspect of the piony, hang down with a pensive air, like the flexile bells of the hyacinth—should that noble plainness, which distinguishes the lily, be exchanged for the glittering fringes which edge the pink; or the gaudy stains which bedrop the iris—should those tapering pillars, which arise in the middle of its vase, and tipt with golden pendants, give such a lustre to the surrounding pannels of alabaster—should those sink and disappear, like the chives which cover the heart of the anemone—In many of these cases, would not the transposition be fantastical and awkward? in all, to the apparent prejudice of every individual?

Again; with regard to the time of their appearing; this circumstance is settled by a remarkable foresight and precaution. What would become of the sailor, if in very stormy weather, he should raise a lofty mast, and croud it with all his canvas! Such would be the ill effect, if the most stately species of flowers should presume to come abroad in the blustering months. Ah! how would they rue the imprudent boldness!

Therefore, those only that shoot the shortest stems, and display the smallest spread of leaves, or (if you please) carry the least sail, are launched amidst the blowing seasons. How injudiciously would the perfumer act, if he should unseal his finest essences, and expose them to the northern winds, or wintry rains! Our blooming artists of the aromatic profession, at least the most delicate among them, seem perfectly aware of the consequences of such a procedure. Accordingly they postpone the opening of their odoriferous treasures, till a serener air, and more unclouded skies,* grant a protection to their amiable traffic; till they are under no more apprehensions, of having their spicy cells rifled by rude blasts, or drowned in incessant showers.

What a striking argument is here for resignation—unfeigned resignation, to all the disposals of providence! Too often are our dissatisfied thoughts apt to find fault with Divine dispensations. We tacitly arraign our Maker's conduct, or question his kindness with regard to ourselves. We fancy our lot, not so commodiously situated, or our condition, not so happily

* Casimir, in a very poetical manner, addresses himself to the dormant rose; and most prettily invites her to venture abroad, by the mention of these two circumstances:

Siderum sacros imitata vultus,
Quid lates dudum, Rosa? Delicatum
Efferr è terris caput. O tepentis
Filia cœli.

Jam tibi nubes fugiunt aquosæ,
Quas fugant albis Zephyri quadrigis:
Jam tibi mulcet Boream jocantis
Aura Favoni.

Child of the summer, charming rose,
No longer in confinement lie;
Arise to light, thy forms disclose,
Rival the spangles of the sky.

The rains are gone, the storms are o'er,
Winter retires to make thee way;
Come then, thou sweetly blushing flow'r;
Come, lovely stranger, come away.

The sun is dress'd in beaming smiles,
To give thy beauties to the day;
Young zephyrs wait, with gentlest gales,
To fan thy bosom, as they play

circumstanced, as if we had been placed in some other station of life.—But, let us behold this exquisitely nice regulation of the minutest plants, and be ashamed of our repining folly. Could any fibre in their composition be altered, or one line in their features be transposed, without clouding some of their beauties? Could any fold in their vestments be varied, or any link in their orderly succession be broken, without injuring some delicate property? And does not that all-seeing eye, which preserves so exact a harmony among these pretty toys, maintain as watchful a care over His rational creatures? Does He choose the properest season for the cowslip to arise and drink the dews? And can He neglect the concerns, or misjudge the conveniencies of His sons and daughters? He, who has so completely disposed, whatever pertains to the vegetable economy, that the least diminution or addition would certainly hurt the finished scheme; does, without all peradventure, preside with equal attention over the interests of his own people.

Be still, then, thou uneasy mortal;* know that God is unerringly wise; and be assured, that, amidst the greatest multiplicity of beings, He does not overlook thee. Thy Saviour has given me authority to assert, That thou art of far superior value, in the estimate of Omnipotence, than all the herbage of the field.—If his

* Permittas ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris.
Nam pro jucundis aptissima quæque dabunt dii
Carior est illis homo, quàm sibi.— *Juv.*

Since all the downward tracts of time
God's watchful eye surveys;
O! who so wise to choose our lot,
And regulate our ways?

Since none can doubt his equal love,
Unmeasurably kind;
To his unerring, gracious will,
Be ev'ry wish resign'd.

Good when He gives, supremely good;
Nor less, when he denies;
Ev'n crosses from his sov'reign hand,
Are blessings in disguise.

sacred will, ordains sickness for thy portion, never dare to imagine that uninterrupted health would be more advantageous. If he pleases to withhold, or take away children, never presume to conclude, that thy happiness is blasted, because thy hopes of an increasing family are disappointed. He, that marshals all the starry host, and so accurately arranges every the meanest species of herbs; He orders all the peculiarities, all the changes of thy state, with a vigilance that nothing can elude; with a goodness that endureth for ever.—Bow thy head, therefore, in humble acquiescence. Rest satisfied, That whatever is, by the appointment of heaven, is right,* is best.

Among all the productions of the third creating-day, this of flowers seem to be peculiarly designed for man. Man has the monopoly of this favour: it is conferred on him, by a sort of exclusive charter. See the imperial crown, splendid and beautifully grand! See the tube-rose, delicate and languishingly fair! See all the pomp and glory of the parterre, where paint and perfume do wonders. Yet the inferior animals are neither smit with their beauties, nor regaled with their odours. The horse never stands still, to gaze upon their charms; nor does the ox turn aside, to browse upon their sweets.

* Whatever is, is right.—If Mr. Pope understands the maxim, according to the limitation suggested above, he speaks a most undeniable and glorious truth: but if that great poet includes whatever comes to pass, through the wild and extravagant passions of men; surely no thinking person, at least no Christian, can accede to his opinion.—What God orders, is wise beyond all possibility of correction; and good, above all that we can ask or think. His decrees, are the result of infinite discernment; and his dispensations, the issues of unbounded benevolence.—But man, fallen man, is hurried away by his lusts, into a thousand irregularities, which are deplorably evil in themselves, and attended with consequences manifestly pernicious to society.—Let the sentiment, therefore, be restrained to the disposals of heaven, and I most readily subscribe it. But, if it be extended to the conduct of men, and the effects of their folly, I think myself obliged to enter my protest against it. For, whatever kindles the Divine indignation—is cause of final ruin to the author—is strictly forbidden by God's holy word—is contrary to the whole design of his revealed will, and the very reverse of his essential attributes.—This, cannot possibly be right. This, is most undoubtedly wrong. Omnipotence indeed, can over-rule it, and educe good from it. But the very notion of over-ruling, supposes it to be absolutely wrong in itself.

Senses they have, to discern these curious objects in the gross, but no taste to distinguish or relish their fine accomplishments.—Just so, carnal and unenlightened men, may understand the literal meaning of scripture; may comprehend the evidences of its Divine inspiration. Yet have no ardent longing for the spiritual blessings it offers, see "no form or comeliness" in the Saviour, it describes, so as to render him the supreme desire of their souls.

The chief end of these beautiful appearances, philosophers say, is to enfold and cherish the embryo seed, or to swathe the tender body, during its infant state.—But, whatever is the chief end of nature, it is certain, she never departs from the design of administering delight to mankind.* This is inseparably connected with her other views.—Were it only to secure a reproductive principle, what need of such elegant complications? Why so much art employed, and so many decorations added? Why should vestments be prepared richer than brocades; more delicate than lawns; and of a finer glow than the most admired velvets?—If the great mother had no other aim, than barely to accommodate her little offspring, warm flannel, or homely fustian, would have served her turn. Served it, full as well as the most sumptuous tissues, or all the furniture of the mercer's shop.

Evident then it is, that flowers were endued with such enchanting graces, for the pleasure of man. In pursuance of this original intention, they have always paid their court to the human race; they still seem particularly solicitous of recommending themselves to our regard. The finest of each species crowd about our habitations, and are rarely to be seen at a distance

* "We find that the most important points in the vegetable world, are those which are the most beautiful. These are the seeds by which the several races of plants are propagated and continued, and which are always lodged in flowers or blossoms. Nature seems to hide her principal design, and to be industrious in making the earth gay and delightful, while she is carrying on her great work, and intent upon her own preservation."—*Spect.* Vol. V. No. 387.

from our abodes. They thrive under our cultivating hand, and observing eye; but degenerate and pine away, if unregarded by their Lord.—To win his attention, and deck his retreats, they hide their deformities under ground; and display nothing but the most graceful forms, and engaging colours to his sight.—To merit a farther degree of his esteem, the generality of them dispense a delightful perfume. What is still more obliging, they reserve their richest exhalations,* to embalm his morning and evening walks.† Because He usually chooses those cool hours, to recreate himself among their blooming ranks; therefore, at those hours, they are most lavish of their fragrance, and breathe out their choicest spirits.

O man, greatly beloved by thy Creator! The darling of providence! Thou art distinguished by his goodness, distinguish thyself also by thy gratitude. Be it thy one undivided aim to glorify him, who has been at so much expense, to gratify thee!—While all these inferior creatures, in silent eloquence declare the glory of God, do thou lend them thy tongue: be thou the high-priest of the mute creation. Let their praises become vocal in thy songs; adore the supreme Benefactor, for the blessings he showers down upon every order of beings. Adore him for numberless mercies, which are appropiated to thyself; but, above all, adore him for that noble gift of a rational, and immortal soul. —This constitutes us masters of the globe, and gives us the real enjoyment of its riches. This discovers ten thousand beauties, which otherwise had been lost, and renders them both a source of delight, and a nursery of devotion.—By virtue of this exalted principle, we are qualified to admire our Maker's works, and capable of

* ——————— The flow'rs,
That open now their choicest bosom'd smells,
Reserv'd from night, and kept for thee in store.—*Milt.*

† The tw'ning jasmine, and the blushing rose,
With lavish grace their morning scents disclose;
The smelling tub'rose and jonquil declare
The stronger impulse of an ev'ning air.—*Prior's Sol.*

bearing his illustrious image: bearing his illustrious image, not only when these ornaments of the ground have resigned their honours, but when the great origin of day is extinguished in the skies, and all the flaming orbs on high are put out in obscure darkness.—Then, to survive, to survive the ruins of one world, and to enjoy God—to resemble God—to be "filled with all the fulness of God," in another—What a happiness, what an inestimable happiness is this! Yet, this is thy privilege, (barter it not for trifles of an hour!) this thy glorious prerogative, O man!

O! the goodness, the exuberant goodness of our God! I cannot forbear celebrating it once more, before I pass to another consideration.—How much should we think ourselves obliged to a generous friend, who should build a stately edifice,* purely for our abode!

* I cannot persuade myself, that the comparison is stretched beyond proper bounds, when carried to this pitch. It is my steadfast opinion, that the world, at least this lower world, with its various appurtenances, was intended purely for man; that it is appropriated to him, and that he (in subordination to God's glory) is the end of its creation.—Other animals, 'tis true, partake of the Creator's benefits: but then they partake under the notion of man's domestics, or on the foot of retainers to him; as creatures, which bear some relation to his service, and some way or other contribute to his good. So that still He is the centre of the whole; or, as our incomparable Milton, equally master of poetry and divinity, expresses himself, all things live for man.—*Par. Lost*, B. XI. 161.

Mr. Pope, in his Ethic Epistles, is pleased to explode this tenet, as the height of pride, and a gross absurdity.—For my part, I see no reason for such a charge. With all submission to so superior a genius, it seems very remote from pride, to be duly sensible of favours vouchsafed: to contemplate them in all the extent of their munificence, and acknowledge them accordingly. I should rather imagine, that to contract their size, when they are immensely large, to stint their number, when they are altogether innumerable; that such a procedure savours more of insensibility, than our hypothesis of presumption; and has more in it of ingratitude, than that of arrogance.

And how can it be deemed an absurdity, to maintain that God gave us a world for our possession, when it is our duty to believe, that he gave us his only Son for our propitiation? Sure, it can be neither difficult, nor extravagant to suppose, that he designed the habitable globe, with its whole furniture, for our present use; since he withheld not his holy child Jesus, but freely delivered him up for our final salvation.

Upon the whole: I cannot but conclude, that the attempt of our famous poet is neither kind, with regard to his fellow-creatures, nor grateful, with regard to his Creator—neither is his scheme, in fact, true. The attempt not kind, with regard to man, because it robs him

But, how greatly would the obligation be increased, if the hand that built, should also furnish it! And not only furnish it with all that is commodious and comfortable, but ornament it also, with whatever is splendid and delightful! This has our most indulgent Creator done, in a manner infinitely surpassing all we could wish, or imagine.

The earth is assigned us for a dwelling.—The skies are stretched over us, like a magnificent canopy, dyed in the purest azure; and beautified now with pictures of floating silver, now with colourings of reflected crimson.—The grass is spread under us, as a spacious carpet, wove with silken threads of green, and damasked with flowers of every hue.—The sun, like a golden lamp, is hung out in the ethereal vault, and pours his effulgence all the day, to lighten our paths.—When

of one of the most delightful and ravishing contemplations imaginable. To consider the great Author of existence as having me in his eye, when he formed universal nature; as contriving all things with an immediate view to the exigencies of my particular state; and making them all in such a manner, as might be most conducive to my particular advantage, this must occasion the strongest satisfactions, whenever I cast a glance on the objects that surround me.—Not grateful with regard to God, because it has the most direct tendency to diminish our sense of his kindness, and by that means, to throw a damp upon our gratitude. It teaches us to look upon ourselves, as almost lost among a crowd of other beings, or regarded only with an occasional and incidental beneficence; which must certainly weaken the disposition, and indeed slacken the ties to the most adoring thankfulness.—To which, I apprehend, we may justly add, Neither is the scheme, in fact, true. For, not to mention what might be urged from the sure word of revelation, this one argument appears sufficiently conclusive. The world began with man, the world must cease with man; consequently, the grand use, the principal end of the world, is to subserve the interest of man. It is on all sides agreed, that the edifice was erected, when man was to be furnished with an habitation; and that it will be demolished, when man has no farther need of its accommodations. When he enters into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, "the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." From which it seems a very obvious and fair deduction that man is the final cause of this inferior creation.

So that I think my readers and myself, privileged (not to say, on the principles of gratitude obliged) to use those lovely lines of our author, with a propriety and truth, equal to their elegance and beauty:

> For me kind Nature wakes her genial pow'r,
> Suckles each herb, and spreads out ev'ry flow'r!
> Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew
> The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
> For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings;
> For me, health gushes from a thousand springs.
>
> *Eth.* Ep. I. ver. 199.

night approaches, the moon takes up the friendly office, and the stars are kindled in twinkling myriads, to cheer the darkness with their milder lustre, not disturb our repose by too intense a glare.—The clouds, besides the rich paintings they hang around the heavens, act the part of a shifting screen; and defend us by their seasonable interposition, from the scorching beams of summer. May we not also regard them, as the great watering-pots of the globe? which, wafted on the wings of the wind, dispense their moisture* evenly through the universal garden, and fructify with their showers, whatever our hand plants.—The fields are our exhaustless granary.—The ocean is our vast reservoir.—The animals spend their strength to dispatch our business; resign their clothing to replenish our wardrobe; and surrender their very lives, to provide for our tables.—In short, every element is a store-house of conveniencies, every season brings us the choicest productions; all nature is our caterer.—And which is a most endearing recommendation of these favours, they are all as lovely as they are useful. You observe nothing mean or inelegant. All is clad in beauty's fairest robe,† and regulated by proportion's nicest rule.

* This circumstance, amidst abundance of other delicate and edifying remarks upon the wonders of nature, is finely touched in the philosophical transactions recorded in the book of Job, chap. xxxviii. ver. 15.—מי פלג לשטף יעלה, "who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters?—The Hebrew is so pregnant and rich with sense, that no translation can do it justice. The following paraphrase, perhaps, may represent the principal ideas comprehended in the expressive original.—Who has branched out, and with admirable judgment, disposed a variety of aqueducts; for that immense collection of waters which float in the sky? Who distributes those pendulous floods through all the borders of the earth? Distributes them, not in dreadful cataracts, or promiscuous gluts of rain; but in kindly drops and refreshing showers, with as much regularity and economy, as if they were conveyed by pipes from a conduit?—To whom shall we ascribe that niceness of contrivance, which now emits, now restrains them; sometimes drives their humid train to one place, sometimes to another; dispenses them to this soil in larger, to that in smaller communications: and in a word, so manages the mighty fluid, that every spot is supplied, in exact proportion to its wants; none destroyed, by an undistinguishing deluge?

† Perhaps it was from such an observation, that the Greeks, those critical and refined judges of things, expressed the mundane system by a word which signifies beauty—κοσμος.

The whole scene exhibits a fund of pleasures to the imagination, at the same time that it more than supplies all our wants.*

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that rebellest against thy Maker. He surrounds thee with unnumbered benefits, and follows thee with an effusion of the richest, noblest gifts. He courts thy affections, he solicits thy gratitude, by liberalities which are never intermitted, by a bounty which knows no limits.—Most blessed Lord! let this thy goodness, thy unwearied goodness, lead us to repentance. Win us to thyself, thou fountain of felicity, by these sweet inducements. Draw us to our duty, thou God of our salvation, by these "cords of love."

What a living picture is here, of the beneficial effects of industry! By industry and cultivation, this neat spot is an image of Eden. Here is all that can entertain the eye, or regale the smell.† Whereas, without cultivation, this sweet garden had been a desolate wilderness. Vile thistles had made it loathsome, and tangling briers inaccessible. Without cultivation, it might have been a nest of serpents, and the horrid haunt of venomous creatures. But the spade and pruning-knife in the hand of industry, have improved it into a sort of terrestrial paradise.

How naturally does this lead our contemplation to the advantages which flow from a virtuous education, and the miseries which ensue from the neglect of it!‡—The mind, without early instruction, will, in all probability, become like the "vineyard of the sluggard." If left to the propensities of its own depraved will, what can we expect, but the most luxuriant growth of unruly

* "Those several living creatures, which are made for our service or sustenance, at the same time either fill the woods with their music, furnish us with game, or raise pleasing ideas in us by the delightfulness of their appearance. Fountains, lakes, and rivers, are as refreshing to the imagination, as to the soil through which they pass."
Spect. Vol. V. No. 387.

† Omnis copia narium.—*Hor.*

‡ Neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris.—*Hor*

appetites; which in time will break forth into all manner of scandalous irregularities? What!—but that anger, like a prickly thorn, arm the temper with an untractable moroseness: peevishness, like a stinging nettle, render the conversation irksome and forbidding: avarice, like some choaking weed, teach the fingers to gripe, and the hands to oppress: revenge, like some poisonous plant, replete with baneful juices, rankle in the breast, and meditate mischief to its neighbour: while unbridled lusts, like swarms of noisome insects, taint each rising thought; and render "every imagination of the heart only evil continually."—Such are the usual products of savage nature! Such, the furniture of the uncultivated soul!

Whereas, let the mind be put under the "nurture and admonition of the Lord:" let holy discipline clear the soil: let sacred instructions sow it with the best seed: let skill and vigilance dress the rising shoots, direct the young ideas how to spread, the wayward passions how to move.—Then what a different state of the inner man, will quickly take place! Charity will breathe her sweets, and hope expand her blossoms: the personal virtues display their graces, and the social ones their fruits:* the sentiments become generous, the carriage endearing, the life honourable and useful.†

O! that governors of families, and masters of schools, would watch with a conscientious solicitude,

* This transformation of the heart, and renewal of the life, are represented in scripture, by similitudes very nearly allied to the images used above.—God, by his sanctifying spirit, will make the soul as a watered garden. Under the operation of this divine principle, the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. Wherever it exerts the refining and ennobling energy, instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier, the myrtle-tree.—*Jerem.* xxxi. 12. *Isai.* xxxv. 1. lv. 13.

† —— A teneris assuescere tanti est!—*Virg.*

—— ου γαρ μικρον διαφερει, το ηθος η ηθος ευθυς εκ νεων εθιζεσθαι, αλλα πανυ πολυ, μαλλον δε το παν. *Aristot.*—The principles we imbibe, and the habits we contract in our early years, are not matters of small moment, but of the utmost consequence imaginable. They not only give a transient or superficial tincture, to our first appearance in life: but most commonly stamp the form of our whole future conduct, and even of our eternal state.

over the morals of their tender charge! What a pity it is, that the advancing generation should lose these invaluable endowments, through any supineness in their instructors!—See! with what assiduity the curious florist attends his little nursery! He visits them early and late, furnishes them with the properest mould, supplies them with seasonable moisture, guards them from the ravages of insects, screens them from the injuries of the weather, marks their springing buds, observes them attentively through their whole progress, and never intermits his anxiety, till he beholds them blown into full perfection.—And shall a range of painted leaves, which flourish to-day, and to-morrow fall to the ground—Shall these be tended with more zealous application than the exalted faculties of an immortal soul!

Yet trust not in cultivation alone. It is the blessing of the Almighty husbandman, which imparts success to such labours of love. If God "seal up the bottles of heaven," and command the clouds to with-hold their fatness, the best manured plot becomes a barren desert. And if He restrain the dew of his heavenly benediction, all human endeavours miscarry; the rational plantation languishes; our most pregnant hopes, from youths of the most promising genius, prove abortive. Their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will go up as dust.*—Therefore, let parents plant; let tutors water; but let both look up to the Father of Spirits, for the desired increase.

On every side, I espy several budding flowers. As yet they are like bales of cloth from the packer's warehouse. Each is wrapt within a strong inclosure, and its contents are tied together by the firmest bandages. So that all their beauties lie concealed, and all their sweets are locked up.—Just such is the niggardly wretch, whose aims are all turned inward, and meanly terminated upon himself; who makes his own private

* Isai. v. 24.

interests, or personal pleasures the sole centre of his designs, and the scanty circumference of his actions.

Ere long, the searching beams will open these silken folds, and draw them into a graceful expansion. Then, what a lovely blush will glow in their cheeks, and what a balmy odour exhale from their bosoms!—So, when divine grace shines upon the mind, even the churl becomes bountiful. The heart of stone is taken away, and a heart of flesh, a heart susceptible of the softest, most compassionate emotions, is introduced in its stead. O! how sweetly do the social affections dilate themselves, under so benign an influence! Just like these disclosing gems, under the powerful eye of day. The tender regards, are no longer confined to a single object; but extend themselves into a generous concern for mankind, and shed liberal refreshments on all within their reach.*

Arise then, thou Sun of Righteousness, arise, with healing under thy wings; and transfuse thy gentle, but penetrating ray, through all our intellectual powers. Enlarge every narrow disposition, and fill us with a diffusive benevolence. Make room in our breasts, for the whole human race; and teach us to love all our fellow-creatures, for their amiable Creator's sake. May we be pleased with their excellencies, and rejoice in their happiness, but feel their miseries as our own, and with a brother's sympathy, hasten to relieve them!

Disposed at proper distances, I observe a range of strong and stately stalks. They stand like towers along the walls of a fortified city, or rise like lofty spires,

* The prophet describing the charitable temper, very beautifully says; If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry! This, I think, may not improperly be illustrated by the circumstances observed above. The opening of those buds into a large and extensive spread, is a pretty portrait of the amplitude of a generous heart; which cannot shut up its compassion, or remain unconcerned at any human calamity. The freeness and copiousness, with which the expanded flowers are continually pouring out their choicest essences, may represent the various acts of an unwearied liberality; together with those endearing words, and that cordial affection, which embalm, as it were, a gift, double its value, and constitute what the sacred penman styles, Drawing out the soul. תפיק נפשך, Deprompseris animam tuam.—*Isai.* lviii. 10.

amidst the group of houses. They part at the top, into several pensile spiky pods. From each of which we shall soon see a fine figure displaying itself; rounded into a form, which constitutes a perfect circle; spread wide open into the most frank and communicative air, and tinged with the colour, which is so peculiarly captivating to the miser's eye.

But the property I chiefly admire, is its passionate fondness for the sun. When the evening shades take place, the poor flower droops, and folds up its leaves. It mourns all the long night, and pines amidst the gloom, like some forlorn lover, banished from the object of his affections. No sooner does Providence open "the eyelids of the morning," but it meets* and welcomes the returning light; courts and caresses it all the day, nor ever loses sight of the refulgent charmer, so long as he continues above the horizon!—In the morning, you may perceive it, presenting a golden bosom to the east; at noon, it points upward to the middle sky; in the evening, follows the same attractive influence to the west.

Surely, Nature is a book, and every page rich with sacred hints. To an attentive mind, the garden turns preacher, and its blooming tenants, are so many lively sermons. What an engaging pattern, and what an excellent lesson, have we here!—So let the redeemed of the Lord look unto Jesus,† and be conformed to their beloved. Let us all be heliotropes (if I may use the expression) to the Sun of Righteousness. Let our passions rise and fall; take this course or that, as his word determines, as his holy example guides. Let us be so accommodated, both to his commanding and providential will, as the wax is turned to the imprinted seal; or, as the aspect of this enamoured flower, to the splendid star, which creates our day.

In every enjoyment, O thou watchful Christian,

* —— Illa suum, quamvis radice tenetur,
Vertitur ad solem. *Ovid*

† Heb. xii. 2.

look unto Jesus; receive it as proceeding from his love, and purchased by his agonies.*—In every tribulation look unto Jesus, mark his gracious hand managing the scourge, or mingling the bitter cup, attempering it to a proper degree of severity, adjusting the time of its continuance, and ready to make these seeming disasters productive of real good.—In every infirmity and failing, look unto Jesus, thy merciful high priest, pleading his atoning blood, and making intercession for transgressors.—In every prayer look unto Jesus, thy prevailing advocate, recommending thy devotions, and "bearing the iniquity of thy holy things!"†—In every temptation look unto Jesus, the author of thy strength, and captain of thy salvation, who alone is able to lift up the hands which hang down, to invigorate the enfeebled knees, and make thee more than conqueror over all thy enemies.—But especially, when the hour of thy departure approaches, when "thy flesh and thy heart fail," when all the springs of life are irreparably breaking, then look unto Jesus with a believing eye.‡ Like expiring Stephen, behold him standing at the right hand of God, on purpose to succour his people in this their last extremity. Yes, my Christian friend, when thy journey through life is finished, and thou art arrived on the very verge of mortality, when thou art just launching out into the invisible world, and all before thee is vast eternity; then, O then, be sure to look steadfastly unto Jesus! "See by faith the Lord's Christ." View him as the only way§ to the everlasting mansions, as the only door‖ to the abodes of bliss.

Yonder tree, which faces the south, has something

* He sunk beneath our heavy woes,
To raise us to his throne:
There's not a gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan. *Watts.*

† Exod. xxviii. 38.

‡ Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Isai. xlv. 22.

§ John xiv. 6. ‖ John x. 9.

too remarkable to pass without observation.—Like the fruitful, though feeble vine, she brings forth a large family of branches; but, unable to support them herself, commits them to the tuition of a sunny wall. As yet, the tender twigs have scarce gemmed their future blossoms. However, I may anticipate the well-known productions, and picture to myself the passion-flower; which will, in due time, with a long and copious succession, adorn the boughs.

I have read, in a Latin author, of flowers inscribed with the names of kings: * but here is one emblazoned with the marks of the bleeding Prince of Life. I read, in the inspired writings, of apostolic men, who bore about in their bodies, the dying of the Lord Jesus: † but here is a blooming religioso, that carries apparent memorials of the same tremendous and fatal catastrophe.—Who would have expected to find such a tragedy of woe, exhibited in a collection of the most delicate delights? Or, to see Calvary's horrid scene, pourtrayed on the softest ornaments of the garden?—Is nature then actuated by the noble ambition of paying commemorative honours to her agonizing Sovereign? Is she kindly officious to remind forgetful mortals of that miracle of mercy, which it is their duty to contemplate, and their happiness to believe?—Or, is a sportive imagination my interpreter, and all the supposed resemblance no more than the precarious gloss of fancy? Be it so: yet even fancy has her merit when she sets forth in such pleasing imagery, the crucified Jesus. Nor shall I refuse a willing regard to Imagination herself, when she employs her creative powers, to revive the sense of such unparalleled love, and prompt my gratitude to so divine a friend.

That spiral tendril, arising from the bottom of the stalk, is it a representation of the scourge which lashed

* Dic, quibus in terris inscripti Nomina Regum
Nascantur Flores?— *Virg.*

† 2 Cor. iv. 10.

the Redeemer's unspotted flesh, and inflicted those stripes, by which our souls are healed? Or is it twisted for the cord, which bound his hands in painful and ignominious confinement: those beneficent hands, which were incessantly stretched out to unloose the heavy burdens, and to impart blessings of every choice kind?—Behold the nails which were drenched in his sacred veins, and rivetted his feet to the accursed tree; those beautiful feet,* which always went about doing good; and travelled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation.—See the hammer, ponderous and massy, which drove the rugged irons through the shivering nerves; and forced a passage for those dreadful wedges, between the dislocated bones.—View the thorns which encircled our royal Master's brow, and shot their keen afflictive points into his blessed head. O the smart! the racking smart! when instead of the triumphal laurel, or the odoriferous garland, that pungent and ragged wreath, was planted on the meek Messiah's forehead! When violent and barbarous blows of the strong eastern cane,† struck the prickly crown, and fixed every thorn deep in his throbbing temples!‡—There stand the disciples, ranged in the green impalement, and forming a circle round the in-

* How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation!—*Isai.* lii. 7.

† "They took the reed, says the sacred historian, and smote him on the head; and so, as it were, nailed down the thorns into his forehead and temples, and occasioned thereby exquisite pain, as well as a great effusion of blood." *Family Expositor*, Vol II. sect. 188.—"It is most probable, adds the same judicious critic, this was a walking-staff which they put into his hand as a sceptre, for a blow with a slight reed would scarce have been felt, or have deserved a mention in a detail of such dreadful sufferings."

‡ The smart, attending this unparalleled piece of contempt and barbarity, must be inexpressibly severe: not only on account of the many painful punctures made in the flesh; but principally because the periosteum, an exquisitely sensible tegument of the bones, lying in those parts, very near the external skin, must receive a multitude of terrible wounds. The anguish of which could not fail of being inflamed to an excess of rage, by the continuance of so many thorny lancets, in that extremely tender membrane, which, in such a case,

—— trembling alive all o'er,
Must smart and agonize at ev'ry pore.

struments of their great Commander's death. They appear like so many faithful adherents, who breathe a gallant resolution, either of defending their Lord to the last extremity, or of dropping honourably by his side. But did they give such proofs of zeal and fidelity in their conduct, as their steady posture, and determined aspect, seem to promise? Alas! what is all human firmness, when destitute of succours from above, but an expiring vapour? What is every saint, if unsupported by powerful grace, but an abandoned traitor?—Observe the glory delineated in double rays, grand with imperial purple, and rich with æthereal blue. But ah! how incapable are threads, though spun by summer's finest hand; though dyed in snows, or dipped in heaven, to display the immaculate excellency of his human, or the ineffable majesty of his divine, nature! Compared with these sublime perfections, the most vivid assemblage of colours fades into an unmeaning flatness; the most charming effects of light and shade are not only mere daubings, but an absolute blank.

Among all the beauties which shine in sunny robes, and sip the silver dews, this, I think, has the noblest import, if not the finest presence. Were they all to pass in review, and expect the award of superiority from my decision, I should not hesitate a moment. Be the prize assigned to this amiable candidate, which has so eminently distinguished, and so highly dignified herself, by bearing such a remarkable resemblance to "the righteous branch, the plant of renown."* While others appoint it a place in the parterre, I would transplant the passion-flower, or rather transfer its sacred significancy to my heart. There let it bloom both in summer and in winter; bloom in the most impressive characters, and with an undecaying lustre. That I may also wear—wear on my very soul, the traces of Immanuel; pierced for my sins, and bruised for my transgressions. That I also may be crucified with

* So the blessed Jesus is described, Jerem. xxiii. 5. Ezek. xxxiv. 29.

Christ;* at least in penitential remorse, and affectionate sympathy. That I may know the fellowship of his suffering;† and feel all my affections wounded by his agonies, mortified by his death.

There is another subject of the verdant kingdom, which on account of its very uncommon qualities, demands my particular notice. One so extremely diffident in her disposition, and delicate in her constitution, that she dares not venture herself abroad in the open air; but is nursed up in the warmth of a hot-bed, and lives cloistered in the cells of a green-house. But the most curious peculiarity is, that of all her kindred species, she alone partakes of perceptive life; at least advances nearest to this more exalted state of being, and may be looked upon as the link, which connects the animal and the vegetable world. A stranger, observing her motions, would almost be induced to suspect, that she is endued with some inferior degrees of consciousness and caution. For if you offer to handle this sensitive plant, she immediately takes an alarm, hastily contracts her fibres; and like a person under apprehensions of violence, withdraws from your finger, in a kind of precipitate disorder. Perhaps the beauty of her aspect might be sullied, or the niceness of her texture discomposed, by the human touch. Therefore, like a coy virgin, she recedes from all unbecoming familiarities, and will admit no such improper, if not pernicious freedom.

Whatever be the cause of this unusual effect, it suggests an instructive admonition to the Christian. Such should be our apprehensive timorous care, with regard to sin; and all, even the most distant approaches of vice. So should we avoid the very appearance of evil, and stand aloof from every occasion of falling.—If sinners entice, if forbidden pleasures tempt, or if opportunity beckon, with the gain of injustice in her hand: O! turn from the gilded snare, touch not the

* Gal. ii. 20. † Phil. iii. 10.

beauteous bane; but fly, fly with haste, fly without any delay from the bewitching ruin.—Does anger draw near with her lighted torch, to kindle the flame of resentment in our breasts? Does flattery ply our ears, with her enchanting and intoxicating whispers? Would discontent lay her leaden hand upon our temper, and mould into our minds her sour leaven, in order to make us a burden to ourselves, and unamiable to others? Instantly let us divert our attention from the dangerous objects, and not so much endeavour to antidote, as to shun the moral contagion. Let us revolve in our meditations, that wonderful meekness of our distressed Master; which amidst the most abusive and provoking insults, maintained a uniform tenour of unshaken serenity. Let us contemplate that prodigious humiliation, which brought Him from an infinite height above all worlds, to make his bed in the dust of death. Let us sooth our jarring, our uneasy passions, with the remembrance of that cheerfulness and resignation which rendered him, in the deepest poverty, unfeignedly thankful, and, under the heaviest tribulations, most submissively patient.

Harbour not, on any consideration, the betrayer of your virtue. Be deaf, inflexibly deaf, to every beguiling solicitation. If it obtrude into the unguarded heart, give it entertainment, no, not for a moment. To parley with the enemy, is to open a door for destruction. Our safety consists in flight: and, in this case, suspicion is the truest prudence; fear the greatest bravery. —Play not on the brink of the precipice. Flutter not round the edges of the flame. Dally not with the stings of death, but reject with a becoming mixture of solicitude and abhorrence, the very first insinuations of iniquity; as cautiously, as the smarting sore shrinks even from the softest hand; as constantly as this jealous plant recoils at the approaching touch.*

* The prophet Isaiah, in an elegant and lively description of the upright man says, He shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, and I may add, from practising any kind of iniquity. The image, exceed-

Not long ago, these curious productions of the spring were coarse and mis-shapen roots. Had we opened the earth, and beheld them in their seed, how uncouth and contemptible had their appearance been! —But now they are the boast of nature; the delight of the sons of men; finished patterns for enamelling and embroidery; outshining even the happiest strokes of the pencil. They are taught to bloom, but with a very inferior lustre, in the richest tapestries, and most magnificent silks.* Art never attempts to equal their incomparable elegancies, but places all her merit in copying after these delicate originals. Even those who glitter in silver, or whose clothing is of wrought gold, are desirous to borrow additional ornaments from a sprig of jessamine, or a little assemblage of pinks.

What a fine idea may we form from hence, of the resurrection of the just, and the state of their reanimated bodies! As the roots even of our choicest flowers, when deposited in the ground, are rude and ungraceful; but when they spring up into blooming life, are most elegant and splendid: so the flesh of a saint, when committed to the dust, alas! what is it? A heap

ingly beautiful, and equally expressive, both illustrates and enforces the doctrine of this whole section. Shaketh his hands, just as a person would do, who happens to have burning coals fall into his lap, or some venomous creature fastening upon his flesh. In such a case, none would stand a moment to consider, or to debate with himself the expediency of the thing. He would instantly fling off the pernicious incumbrance; instantly endeavour to disengage himself from the clinging mischief.—*Isai.* xxxiii. 15.

I have represented the danger of not extinguishing immediately the very first sparks of temptation, in a variety of views. Because a proper behaviour in this conjuncture, is of such vast importance to the purity, the safety, and the comfort of our minds.—Because I had the royal moralist in my eye, who, deterring his pupils from the path of the wicked, cries, with an air of deep concern, and in the language of vehement importunity; cries, Avoid it—pass not by it—turn from it, and pass away.——How strongly is the counsel urged, by being so frequently repeated, in such a remarkable diversity of concise and abrupt, consequently of forcible and pressing, admonitions!—*Prov.* iv. 15.

* The cowslip smiles in brighter yellow drest,
Than that which veils the nubile virgin's breast
A fairer red stands blushing in the rose,
Than that which on the bridegroom's vestments flows.
Prior's Sol.

of corruption, a mass of putrefying clay. But when it obeys the great archangel's call, and starts into a new existence, what an astonishing change ensues! What a most ennobling improvement takes place!—That which was sown in weakness, is raised in all the vivacity of power. That which was sown in deformity, is raised in the bloom of celestial beauty. Exalted, refined, and glorified, it will shine "as the brightness of the firmanent," when it darts the inimitable blue, through the fleeces—the snowy fleeces, of some cleaving cloud.

Fear not, then, thou faithful Christian; fear not at the appointed time, to descend into the tomb. Thy soul thou mayst trust with thy omnipotent Redeemer, who is Lord of the unseen world; "who has the keys of hell and of death." Most safely mayst thou trust thy better part in those beneficent hands, which were pierced with nails, and fastened to the ignominious tree for thy salvation.—With regard to thy earthly tabernacle, be not dismayed. It is taken down, only to be rebuilt upon a diviner plan, and in a more heavenly form. If it retires into the shadow of death, and lies immured in the gloom of the grave, it is only to return from a short confinement to endless liberty. If it falls into dissolution, it is in order to rise more illustrious from its ruins, and wear an infinitely brighter face of perfection and of glory.

Having now made my panegyric, let me next take up a lamentation for these loveliest productions of the vegetable world.—For I foresee their approaching doom. Yet a little while, and all these pleasing scenes vanish. Yet a little while, and all the sweets of the breathing, all the beauties of the blooming, spring, are no more. Every one of these amiable forms must be shriveled to deformity, and trodden to the earth.—Significant resemblance this, of all created beauty. "All flesh is grass," like the green herbage, liable and prone to fade. Nay, all the goodliness thereof, its finest accomplishments, and what the world universally admires,

is as the flower of the field;* which loses its gloss, decays and perishes more speedily than the grass itself. —Behold then, ye brightest among the daughters of Eve, behold yourselves in this glass. See the charms of your person eclipsed by the lustre of these little flowers, and the frailty of your state represented by their transient glories.† A fever may scorch those polished veins; a consumption may emaciate the dimpling cheeks; and a load of unexpected sorrows depress those lively spirits. Or should these disasters, in pity, spare the tender frame, yet age, inexorable age and wrinkles, will assuredly come at last; will wither all the fine features, and blast every sprightly grace.

Then, ye fair, when those sparkling eyes are darkened, and sink in their orbs; when they are rolling in

* Isai. xl. 6.

† Και το ροδον καλον εστι, και ο χρονος αυτο μαραινει·
Και το ιον καλον εστιν εν ακμη, και ταχυ γηρας·
Λευκον το κρινον εστι, μαραινεται αυικα πιπτη·
Α δε χιων λευκα, και ταυτ'ιδια αυικα παγχυ·
Και καλλος καλον εστι το παιδικον,' αλλ' ολιγοχρη·

The reader will excuse me if I imitate, rather than translate, these lines from Theocritus—if I vary one image, add another, and give a new turn to the whole.

When snows descend, and robe the field
In Winter's bright array;
Touch'd by the sun, the lustre fades,
And weeps itself away.

When Spring appears; when violets blow,
And shed a rich perfume;
How soon the fragrance breathes its last!
How short-liv'd is the bloom!

Fresh in the morn, the Summer rose
Hangs with'ring ere 'tis noon:
We scarce enjoy the balmy gift,
But mourn the pleasure gone.

With gliding fire, an ev'ning star
Streaks the Autumnal skies;
Shook from the sphere, it darts away,
And, in an instant, dies.

Such are the charms that flush the cheek,
And sparkle in the eye:
So, from the lovely finish'd form,
The transient graces fly.

To this the seasons, as they roll,
Their attestation bring:
They warn the Fair; their ev'ry round
Confirms the truth I sing.

agonies, or swimming in death, how will you sustain the affliction? how will you repair the loss?—Apply your thoughts to religion. Attend to the "one thing needful." Believe in, and imitate, the blessed Jesus. Then shall your souls mount up to the realms of happiness, when the well-proportioned clay is mingling with its mean original. The light of God's countenance will irradiate, with matchless and consummate perfection, all their exalted faculties. Cleansed entirely from every dreg of corruption, like some unsullied mirror, they will reflect the complete image of their Creator's holiness.—O! that you would thus dress your minds, and prepare for the immortal state! Then, from shining among your fellow-creatures on earth, you shall be translated to shine around the throne of God—then, from being the sweeteners of our life, and the delight of our eyes here below, you shall pass by an easy transition into angels of light; and become "an everlasting excellency, the joy of all generations."

Yes, ye flowery nations, ye must all decay.—Yonder lily, that looks like the queen of the gay creation, see how gracefully it erects its majestic head! What an air of dignity and grandeur ennobles its aspect! For elevated mien, as well as for incomparable lustre, justly may it be preferred to the magnificent monarch of the east.* But, all stately and charming as it is, it will hardly survive a few more days. That unspotted whiteness must quickly be tarnished, and the snowy form defiled in the dust.

As the lily pleases, with the noble simplicity of its appearance, the tulip is admired for the gayety and multiplicity of its colours. Never was cup either painted or enamelled with such a profusion of dies. Its tinges are so glowing, its contrasts so strong, and the arrangement of them both so elegant and artful! —'Twas lately the pride of the border, and the reigning beauty of the delightful season. As exquisitely fine as the rainbow, and almost as extremely transient. It

* Matt. vi. 29.

spread for a little moment its glittering plumage, but has now laid all its variegated and superior honours down. Those radiant stripes are blended, alas! rudely blended, with common mould.

To a graceful shape, and blooming complexion, the rose adds the most agreeable perfume. Our nostrils make it repeated visits, and are never weary of drinking in its sweets. A fragrance, so peculiarly rich and reviving, transpires from its opening tufts, that every one covets its acquaintance. How have I seen even the accomplished Clarissa, for whom so many votaries languish, fondly caressing this little flower! That lovely bosom, which is the seat of innocence and virtue; whose least excellency it is, to rival the delicacy of the purest snows; among a thousand charms of its own, thinks it possible to adopt another from the damask rose-bud.—Yet, even this universal favourite must fail. Its native balm cannot preserve it from putrefaction. Soon, soon, must it resign all those endearing qualities, and hang neglected on its stem, or drop despised to the ground.

One could wish, methinks, these most amiable of the inanimate race a longer existence: but in vain—They fade almost as soon as they flourish; within less than a month, their glories are extinct. Let the sun take a few more journeys through the sky; then visit this enchanting walk, and you will find nothing but a wretched wilderness of ragged or naked stalks; but (my soul exults in the thought) the garment of celestial glory, which shall ere long array the re-animated body, will never wax old. The illustrious robes of a Saviour's consummate righteousness, which even now adorn the justified spirits, are incorruptible and immortal. No moth can corrode their texture, no number of ages sully their brightness. The light of day may be quenched, and all the stars sink in obscurity; but the honours of "just men made perfect," are subject to no diminution—inextinguishable and unfading is the lustre of their crown.

Yes, ye flowery nations, ye must all decay.—Winter,

like some enraged and irresistible conqueror, that carries fire and sword wherever he advances; that demolishes towns, depopulates countries; spreads slaughter and desolation on every side. So, just so, will winter, with his savage and unrelenting blasts, invade this beautiful prospect. The storms are gathering, and the tempests mustering their rage, to fall upon the vegetable kingdoms. They will ravage through the dominions of nature, and plunder her riches, and lay waste her charms. Then, ye trees, must ye stand stript of your verdant apparel; and, ye fields, be spoiled of your waving treasures. Then, the earth, disrobed of all her gay attire, must sit in sables, like a disconsolate widow. The sun too, who now rides in triumph round the world, and scatters gayety from his radiant eye, will then look faintly from the windows of the south; and casting a short glance on our dejected world, will leave us to the uncomfortable gloom of tedious nights.—Then, these pretty choristers of the air, will chant no more to the gentle gales. The lark, the linnet, and all the feathered songsters, abandon their notes, and indulge their woes. The harmony of the woods is at an end; and silence, (unless it be interrupted by howling winds) a sullen silence sits brooding upon the boughs; which are now made vocal, by a thousand warbling throats.

But (sweet recollection! ravishing expectation!) the songs of saints in light never admit a pause for sadness. All heaven will resound with the melody of their gratitude; and all eternity echo to their triumphant acclamations. The hallelujahs of that world, and the harmonious joy of its inhabitants, will be as lasting as the divine perfections they celebrate.—Come then, holy love, and tune my heart; descend, celestial fire, and touch my tongue, that I may stand ready to strike up, and bear my part, in that great hosanna, that everlasting hymn.

Yes, yes, ye flowery nations, ye must all decay.—And indeed, could you add the strength of an oak, or

the stability of a pyramid,* to all the delicacy of your texture; yet short, exceeding short, even then, would your duration be; for I see, that all things come to an end. The pillars of nature are tottering. The foundations of the round world are falling away. "The heavens themselves wax old like a garment."—But amidst these views of general ruin, here is our refuge; this is our consolation, "We know that our Redeemer liveth." Thy years, blessed Jesus! shall not fail. From everlasting to everlasting, thou art still the same: the same most excellent and adorable person; the same omnipotent and faithful friend; the same all-sufficient and inestimable portion. O! may we but partake of thy merits, be sanctified by thy grace, and received into thy glory!—Then perish, if ye will, all inferior delights. Let all that is splendid in the skies expire, and all that is amiable in nature, be expunged. Let the whole extent of creation be turned again into one undistinguishable void, one universal blank.—Yet if God be ours, we shall have enough. If God be ours, we shall have all, and abound.† All that our circumstances can want, or our wishes crave, to make us inconceivably blessed and happy. Blessed and happy, not only through this little interval of time, but through the unmeasurable revolutions of eternity.

The sun is now come forth in his strength, and beats fiercely upon my throbbing pulse.—Let me retire to

* I know not any performance, in which the transitory nature of these most durable monuments of human grandeur is hinted with such a modest air of instruction, or their hideous ruin described in such a pomp of pleasing horror, as in a small, but solemn picturesque and majestic poem, entitled The Ruins of Rome, written by the Rev. Mr. Dyer. Whom the reader (if he has the pleasure of perusing that beautiful piece) will easily perceive to have taken his draughts from the originals themselves: as nothing but the sight of those magnificent remains could have inspired his lines with such vivacity.—As a specimen of the work, and a confirmation of the remark suggested above, I take leave to transcribe the following passage:

——— The pilgrim oft,
At dead of night, mid his oraison hears
Aghast the voice of time, disparting tow'rs,
Tumbling all precipitate down dash'd,
Rattling around, loud thund'ring to the moon.

† His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
And bids earth roll, nor feels the idle whirl.
Night-Thoughts, No. IV.

yonder inviting arbour. There the woodbines retain the lucid drop, there the jessamines which line the verdant alcove are still impearled, and deliciously wet with dews.—Welcome, ye refreshing shades! I feel, I feel, your cheering influence.—My languid spirits revive, the slackened sinews are new strung, and life bounds brisker through all her crimson channels.

Reclined on this mossy couch, and surrounded by this fragrant coldness, let me renew my aspirations to the ever-present Deity. Here let me remember and imitate the pious Augustine and his mother Monica; who, being engaged in discourse on the beauties of the visible creation, rose by these ladders to the glories of the invisible state, till they were inspired with the most affecting sense of their supereminent excellency, and actuated with the most ardent breathings, after their full enjoyment. Insomuch, that they were almost wrapt up into the bliss they contemplated; and scarce "knew whether they were in the body, or out of the body."

When tempests toss the ocean; when plaintive signals of distress are heard from the bellowing deep, and melancholy tokens of shipwreck come floating on the foaming surge, then how delightful to stand safe on shore, and hug one's self in conscious security.*—When a glut of waters bursts from some mighty torrent, rushes headlong over all the neighbouring plains, sweeps away the helpless cattle, and drives the affrighted shepherd from his hut, then, from the top of a distant eminence, to descry the danger, we need not fear; how pleasing!—Such methinks is my present situation: for now the sun blazes from on high, the air glows with his fire, the fields are rent with chinks, the roads are scorched to dust: the woods seem to contract a

* As Lucretius gave the hint for these observations, so he assigns the reason of the pleasure specified. It arises not from the consideration of another's misery; this would argue the rankest malevolence: but from the agreeable contemplation of our own personal safety; which while we view circumstances that are pernicious to others, but harmless to ourselves, is not a little heightened by the contrast. Suave Mari magno, &c.

sickly aspect and a russet hue: the traveller, broiled as he rides, hastens to his inn, and intermits his journey: the labourer, bathed in sweat, drops the scythe, and desists from his work: the cattle flee to some shady covert, or else pant and toss under the burning noon. Even the stubborn rock, smit with the piercing beams, is ready to cleave. All things languish beneath the dazzling deluge—while I shall enjoy a cool hour, and calm reflection, amidst the gloom of this bowery recess, which scarce admits one speck of sunshine.

Thus may both the flock and their shepherd, dwell beneath the defence of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* Then though the pestilence walketh in darkness,† and the sickness destroyeth at noonday; though thousands fall beside us, and ten thousands at our right hand, we need fear no evil. Either the destroying angel shall pass over our houses, or else, he shall dispense the corrections of a friend, not the scourges of an enemy; which, instead of hurting us, shall work for our good.—Then, though profaneness and infidelity, far more malignant evils, breathe deadly contagion, and taint the morals of multitudes around us, yet if the great Father of Spirits "hide us in the hollow of his hand," we shall hold fast our integrity, and be faithful unto death.

Let then, dearest Lord, O! let thy servant and the people committed to his care, be received into thy protection. Let us take sanctuary under that tree of life, erected in thy ignominious cross. Let us fly for safety to that city of refuge, opened in thy bleeding wounds. These shall be a sacred hiding-place, not to be pierced by the flames of divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptation. Thy dying merits, and perfect obedience, shall be to our souls as rivers of water in a dry place, or as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.‡

But most of all, in that last tremendous day, when the heavens are rent asunder, and wrapped up like a

* Psalm xci. 1.

† This was written when a very infectious and mortal distemper raged in the neighbourhood.

‡ Isai. xxxii. 2.

scroll—when thy Almighty arm shall arrest the sun in his career, and dash to pieces the structure of the universe—when the dead, both small and great, shall be gathered before the throne of thy glory, and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final irreversible decision—then, blessed Jesus, let us be owned by thee, and we shall not be ashamed; defended by thee, and we shall not be afraid! O! may we at that awful, that unutterably important juncture, be covered with the wings of thy redeeming love; and we shall behold all the horrible convulsions of expiring nature with composure, with comfort! We shall even welcome the dissolution of all things, as the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*

There are, I perceive, who still attend the flowers, and, in defiance of the sun, ply their work on every expanded blossom—the bees, I mean. That nation of chymists! to whom nature has communicated the rare and valuable secret of enriching themselves, without impoverishing others; who extract the most delicious syrup from every fragrant herb, without wounding its substance, or diminishing its odours.—I take the more notice of these ingenious operators, because I would willingly make them my pattern.† While the gay butterfly flutters her painted wings, and sips a little fantastic delight, only for the present moment; while the gloomy spider, worse than idly busied, is preparing his insidious nets for destruction, or sucking venom even from the most wholesome plants, this frugal community are wisely employed in providing for futurity, and collecting a copious stock of the most balmy treasures.—And O! might these meditations sink into my soul! Would the God, who suggested each heavenly thought, vouchsafe to convert it into an established principle; to determine all my inclinations, and regulate my whole conduct! I should then

* Acts iii. 19.

† —— Ego apis matinæ
More modoque
Grata carpentis thyma. *Hor.*

gather advantages from the same blooming objects, more precious than your golden stores, ye industrious artists. I also should go home, laden with the richest sweets, and the noblest spoils; though I crop not a leaf, nor call a single flower my own.

Here I behold, assembled in one view, almost all the various beauties which have been severally entertaining my imagination. The vistas, struck through an ancient wood, or formed by rows of venerable elms, conducting the spectator's observation to some remarkable object, or leading the traveller's footsteps to this delightful seat:—The walls, enriched with fruit-trees, and faced with a covering of their leafy extensions, I should rather have said, hung with different pieces of nature's noblest tapestry:—The walks, neatly shorn, and lined with verdure, or finely smoothed, and coated with gravel:—The alleys, arched with shades, to embower our noon-tide repose, or thrown open for the free accession of air, to invite us to our evening recreation:—The decent edgings of box, which enclose, like a plain selvage, each beautiful compartment, and its splendid figures:—The shapely evergreens, and flowering shrubs, which strike the eye, and appear with peculiar dignity, in this distant situation:—The basin, with its crystal fount, floating in the centre, and diffusing an agreeable freshness through the whole:—The waters, falling from a remote cascade, and gently murmuring as they flow along the pebbles:—These, added to the rest, and all so disposed, that each recommends and endears each, render the whole a most sweet ravishing scene of order and variety, of elegance and magnificence.

From so many lovely prospects clustering upon the sight, it is impossible not to be reminded of heaven—That world of bliss, those regions of light, where the Lamb that was slain manifests his beatific presence, and his saints live for evermore.—But O! what pencil can sketch out a draught of that goodly land? What colours, or what style, can express the splendours of Immanuel's kingdom! Would some celestial hand draw aside the veil, but for one moment, and permit us

to throw a single glance on those divine abodes, how would all sublunary possessions become tarnished in our eyes, and grow flat upon our taste! A glimpse, a transient glimpse, of those unutterable beatitudes, would captivate our souls, and engross all their faculties. Eden itself, after such a vision, would appear a cheerless desert; and all earthly charms, intolerable deformity.

Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God.* Volumes has been written, and those by inspired men, to display the wonders of thy perfections. All that is rich and resplendent in the visible creation, has been called in to aid our conceptions, and elevate our ideas. But indeed no tongue can utter, no pen can describe, no fancy can imagine, what God, of his unbounded munificence, has prepared for them that love him.—Seeing then that all terrestrial things must come to a speedy end, and there remaineth a rest, a blissful and everlasting rest, for the people of God; let me never be too fondly attached to any present satisfactions. Weaned from whatever is temporal, may I maintain a superior indifference for such transitory enjoyments, but long, long earnestly, for the mansions that are above; the paradise "which the Lord hath planted, and not man." Thither may I transmit the chief of my conversation, and from thence expect the whole of my happiness. Be that the sacred powerful magnet, which ever influences my heart, ever attracts my affections. There are such transcendent glories as eye has not seen: there are such transporting pleasures as ear has not heard: there is such a fulness of joys, as the thought of man cannot conceive.

Into that consummate felicity, (those eternal fruitions,) permit me, Madam, to wish you, in due time, an abundant entrance; and to assure you, that this wish is breathed with the same sincerity and ardour for my honoured correspondent, as it is, Madam, for

Your most obedient, &c.

J. HERVEY.

* Psalm lxxxvii. 2.

A

DESCANT

UPON

CREATION.

With joy, with grief, that healing hand I see;
The skies it form'd, and yet it bled for me.
Night Thoughts, No. IV.

CONTENTS.

Design of the whole.—Angels.—The visible Heavens.—Stars.—Comets. Planets.—Sun.—Moon.—Thunders.—Lightnings.—Clouds, wintry and vernal.—Rainbow.—Storms and Tempests.—Pestilence.—Heat and Cold.—Ocean.—Woods and Shrubs.—Vine and Fruit Trees.—Meadows and Fields.—Mines and Jewels.—Fountains and Rivers.—Birds.—Bees.—Silkworm.—Cattle and Creatures in every Element.—General Chorus of Praise.

A

DESCANT

UPON

CREATION.

IF the reader pleases to look back on page 112, he will find me engaged, by a promissory note, to subjoin a Descant upon Creation.

To know the love of Christ, to have such a deep apprehension of his unspeakable kindness, as may produce in our hearts an adoring gratitude, and an unfeigned faith—this, according to St. Paul's estimate, is the highest and happiest attainment in the sacred science of Christianity.* What follows is an attempt to assist the attentive mind, in learning a line or two of that best and greatest lesson. It introduces the most conspicuous parts of the visible system as so many prompters to our dull affections; each suggesting a hint adapted to the important occasion, and suited to its respective character.

Can there be a more powerful incentive to devout gratitude than to consider the magnificent and delicate scenes of the universe, with a particular reference to Christ as the creator?—Every object viewed in this light will surely administer incessant recruits to the languishing lamp of divine love. Every production in nature will strike a spark into the soul, and the whole creation concur to raise the smoking flax into a flame.

Can any thing impart a stronger joy to the believer,

* Eph. iii. 19.

or more effectually confirm his faith in the crucified Jesus, than to behold the heavens declaring his glory, and the firmament showing his handy-work? Surely, it must be matter of inexpressible consolation to the poor sinner, to observe the honours of his Redeemer written with sun-beams over all the face of the world.

We delight to read an account of our incarnate Jehovah, as He is revealed in the books of Moses and the prophets, as He is displayed in the writings of the evangelists and apostles. Let us also endeavour to see a sketch of his perfections, as they stand delineated in that stately volume, where every leaf is a spacious plain—every line a flowing brook—every period a lofty mountain.

Should any of my readers be unexercised in such speculations, I beg leave (in pursuance of my promise) to present them with a specimen, or to offer a clue, which may possibly lead their minds into this most improving and delightful train of thinking.

Should any be inclined to suspect the solidity of the following observations, or to condemn them as the voice of rant, and the lawless flight of fancy, I must entreat such persons to recollect, that the grand doctrine, the hinge on which they all turn, is warranted and established by the unanimous testimony of the inspired penmen; who frequently celebrate Immanuel, or Christ Jesus, as the great Almighty cause of all; assuring us, that all things were created by Him, and for Him, and that in Him all things consist.*

On such a subject, what is wonderful is far from being extravagant. To be wonderful, is the inseparable characteristic of God and his works; especially of that most distinguished and glorious even of the divine works, redemption:—so glorious, that "all the miracles in Egypt, and the marvellous acts in the field of Zoan;" all that the Jewish annals have recorded, or the human ear has heard, all dwindle into trivial events,

* Col. 1. 16, 17. Before my reader enters upon the following Descant he is desired to peruse the note, pag. 92.

are scarce worthy to be remembered,* in comparison of this infinitely grand and infinitely gracious transaction.—Kindled, therefore, into pleasing astonishment by such a survey, let me give full scope to my meditations. Let me pour out my whole soul on the boundless subject; not much regarding the limits which cold criticism, or colder unbelief, might prescribe.

O ye angels, that surround the throne, ye princes of heaven, "that excel in strength," and are clothed with transcendent brightness; He, who placed you in those stations of exalted honour, and dignified your nature with such illustrious endowments; He, whom you all obey, and all adore: He took not on him the angelic form, but was made flesh, and found in fashion as a man. Like us wretched mortals, He was subject to weariness, pain, and every infirmity, (sin only excepted)—that we might one day be raised to your sublime abodes, be adopted into your blissful society, and join with your transported choir, in giving glory to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever!†

O ye heavens, whose azure arches rise immensely high, and stretch unmeasurably wide: stupendous amphitheatre! amidst whose vast expansive circuit orbs of the most dreadful grandeur are perpetually running their amazing races: unfathomable depths of æther! where worlds unnumbered float, and, to our limited sight, worlds unnumbered are lost:—He, who adjusted your dimensions with his span, and formed the magnificent structure with his word; He was once wrapt in swaddling-cloaths, and laid in a manger:—that the benefits accruing to his people, through his most meritorious humiliation, might have no other measure of their value than immensity; might run parallel, in their duration, with eternity.

Ye stars, that beam with inextinguishable brilliancy through the midnight sky; oceans of flame and centres

* Isai. xliii. 18. † Rev. v. 13.

of worlds, though seemingly little points of light:—He, who shone with essential effulgence innumerable ages before your twinkling tapers were kindled! and will shine with everlasting majesty and beauty, when your places in the firmament shall be known no more: He was involved, for many years, in the deepest obscurity; lay concealed in the contemptible city Nazareth; lay disguised under the mean habit of a carpenter's son:—that he might plant the heavens,* as it were, with new constellations, and array these clods of earth, these houses of clay, with a radiancy far superior to yours: a radiancy, which will adorn the very heaven of heavens, when you shall vanish away like smoke,† or expire as momentary sparks from the smitten steel!

Comets, that sometimes shoot into the illimitable tracts of æther, farther than the discernment of our eye is able to follow; sometimes return from the long, long excursion, and sweep our affrighted hemisphere with your enormous fiery train; that sometimes make near approaches to the sun, and burn almost in his immediate beams; sometimes retire to the remotest distance, and freeze, for ages, in the excessive rigours of winter: He, who at his sovereign pleasure withdraws the blazing wonder, or leads forth the potentous stranger to shake terror over guilty kingdoms; He was overwhelmed with the most shocking amazement, and plunged into the deepest anxiety; was chilled with apprehensions of fear, and scorched by the flames of avenging wrath:—that I, and other depraved rebellious creatures, might not be eternally agitated with the ex-

* Isai. li. 16.

† Alluding to a passage in Isaiah, which is, I think, grand and elevated beyond all comparison.—Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die like the feeble insect: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation shall not be abolished, Isai. li. 6.—With the great Vitringa, I translate the words כמו כן not in like manner, but like the feeble insect. Which renders the period more complete, the sense more emphatical, and is more agreeable to the genius of the sacred original.

tremes of jarring passions, opposite, yet on either side tormenting,—far more tormenting to the soul than the severest degrees of your heat and cold to the human sense.

Ye planets, that, winged with unimaginable speed, traverse the regions of the sky; sometimes climbing millions and millions of miles above, sometimes descending as far below the great axle of your motions; ye that are so minutely faithful to the vicissitudes of day and night, so exactly punctual in bringing on the changes of your respective seasons: He, who launched you at first from his mighty arm, who continually impels you with such wonderful rapidity, and guides you with such perfect regularity; who fixes "the habitation of his holiness and his glory," infinite heights above your scanty rounds; He once became a helpless infant; sojourned in our inferiour world; fled from the persecutor's sword, and wandered as a vagabond in a foreign land:—that He might lead our feet into the way of peace, that he might bring us aliens near to God, bring us exiles home to heaven.

Thou sun, inexhausted source of light, and heat, and comfort! who, without the assistance of any other fire, sheddest day through a thousand realms; and not confining thy munificence to realms only, extendest thy enlightening influences to surrounding worlds: prime cheerer of the animal, and great enlivener of the vegetable tribes! so beautiful in thyself, so beneficial in thy effects, that erring heathens addressed thee with adorations, and mistook thee for their Maker!—He, who filled thy orb with a profusion of lustre; before whom thy meridian splendours are but a shade—He divested himself of his all-transcending distinctions, and drew a veil over the effulgence of his divinity; that by speaking to us, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, He might dispel our intellectual darkness. His "visage was marred,"* and He became the scorn of men, the outcast of the people;

* Isai. lii. 14.

that, by this manifestation of his unutterably tender regard for our welfare, He might diffuse many a gleam of joy through our dejected minds: that, in another state of things, he might clothe even our fallen nature with the honours of that magnificent luminary, and give all the righteous to shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

Thou moon, that walkest among the host of stars, and in thy lucid appearance art superior to them all; fair ruler of the night! sometimes half-restoring the day with thy waxing brightness; sometimes waning into dimness, and scarcely scattering the nocturnal gloom; sometimes covered with sackcloth, and alarming the gazing nations:—He, who dresses thy opaque globe in beaming but borrowed silver; He, whose dignity is unchangeable, underived, and all his own; He vouchsafed to wear a body of clay; He was content to appear as in a bloody eclipse, shorn of his resplendent beams, and surrounded with a night of horror, which knew not one reviving ray!—Thus has he empowered his church, and all believers, to tread the moon under their feet.* Hence, inspired with the hope of brighter glory, and of more enduring bliss, are they enabled to triumph over all the vain anxieties, and vainer amusements, of this sublunary, precarious, mutable world.

Ye thunders, that awfully grumbling in the distant clouds, seem to meditate indignation, and form the first essays of a far more frightful peal; or, suddenly bursting over our heads, rend the vault above, and shake the ground below, with a hideous, horrid crack: ye that send your tremendous vollies from pole to pole, startling the savage herds,† and astonishing the human race:—He, who permits terror to sound her trumpet in your deep, prolonged, enlarging, aggravated roar: He uttered a feeble infantile cry in the stable, and strong expiring groans on the accursed tree:—that He might, in the gentlest accents, whisper peace to our

* Rev. xii. 1. † Psal. xxix. 8.

souls, and at length tune our voices to the melody of heaven.

O ye lightnings, that brood and lie couchant in the sulphureous vapours; that glance with forked fury from the angry gloom swifter and fiercer than the lion rushes from his den; or open into vast expansive sheets of flame, sublimely waved over the prostrate world, and fearfully lingering in the affrighted skies: ye that formerly laid in ashes the licentious abodes of lust and violence; that will, ere long, set on fire the elements, and co-operate in the conflagration of the globe: He, who kindles your flash, and directs you when to sally, and where to strike; He, who commissions your whirling bolts whom to kill, and whom to spare; He resigned his sacred person to the most barbarous indignities; submitted his beneficent hands to the ponderous hammer, and the piercing nail; yea, withheld not his heart, his very heart, from the stab of the executioner's spear; and, instead of flashing confusion on his outrageous tormenters; instead of plunging them to the depths of hell with his frown; He cried—in his last moments, and with his agonizing lips, He cried, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!—O! what a pattern of patience for his saints! What an object of admiration for angels! What a constellation of every mild, amiable, and benign virtue; shining in this hour of darkness, with ineffable splendour and beauty![*]—Hence, hence it is, that we are not trembling under the lightnings of Mount Sinai;

[*] One can hardly forbear animadverting upon the disengenuous temper, and perverse taste, of Celsus; who attempts to turn this most distinguishing and ornamental part of our Lord's life, into ridicule and reproach.—Having spoken of Christ, as despitefully used, and arrayed in a purple robe, crowned with thorns, and holding, by way of mock majesty, a reed instead of a sceptre (for he enters into all these circumstances, which is a testimony to their truth, even from the mouth of an enemy), He adds—Τι ουκ, ει μη προσθεν, αλλα νυν γουν θειον τι ενεδεικνυτο; και της αισχυνης ταυτης εαυτον ρυεται, και τους υβριζοντας εις εαυτον τε και τον πατερα δικαιοι; Orig. contra. Cels. p. 81. i. e. Why, in the name of wonder, does He not on this occasion, at least, act the God? Why does he not deliver himself from this shocking ignominy, or execute some signal vengeance on the authors of such injurious and abusive insults, both of himself and his Father?—Why, Celsus!

that we are not blasted by the flames of divine vengeance, or doomed to dwell with everlasting burnings.

Ye frowning wintry clouds, oceans pendant in the air, and burdening the winds: He, in whose hand you are an overflowing scourge; or, by whose appointment, an arsenal of warlike stores:* He, who opens your sluices, and a flood gushes forth to destroy the fruits of the earth, and drown the husbandman's hopes; who moulds you into frozen balls, and you are shot, linked with death, on the troops of his enemies:† He, instead of discharging the furiousness of his wrath upon

Because, he was meekness and gentleness itself: whereas your deities were slaves to their own turbulent and resentful passions. Because they were little better than savages in human shape, who too often made a merit of slaughter, and took a horrid pride in spilling blood. While Christ was the Prince of Peace, and came not to destroy men's lives, but to save. Because any madman on earth, or fury from hell, is capable of venting his rage. But who, amidst such unsufferable provocations and barbarities; who having in his own hand the power to rescue himself, the power to avenge himself; could submit to all, with an unruffled serenity of patience, and not only not be exasperated but overcome, in so triumphant a manner, evil with good? None but Christ! None but Christ! This was compassion worthy of a God; clemency and charity truly divine!

Therefore, the calumny raised by the same virulent objector, in another place, carries its own confutation: or rather falls with a weight of infamy on his dunghill deities; while it bears a most honourable testimony to the majestic and invincible meekness of our Saviour.—Συ μεν, says he to the Christian, τα αγαλματα τῶν λοιδορεῖ καθαγελας, ως ουδεν γε του Διονυσου η του Ηρακλεα ωκριγλα ει ὑλοδορησας, ει αν ωνης Χαιρων ασυλλαβας· τον γε σον Θεον ωκριγλα καθαιονοῖς και κολαζοῖτες, ουδεν ει ταυτα δρασαντες ωπονθασιν, ibid. p. 404. i. e. You indeed take upon you to deride the images of our deity; but if Bacchus himself, or Hercules had been present, you would not have dared to offer such an affront, or if you had been so presumptuous, would have severely smarted for your insolence. Whereas, they who tormented the very person of your God, and even extended him with mortal agony on the cross, suffered no effects of his displeasure.

* Juvenal seems to consider the clouds, under this same character, in that beautiful line,

Quicquid habent telorum armamentaria cœli.

† Job has informed us, for what purpose the magazines of the firmament are stocked with hail. That they may be ready, against the day of battle and war—Job xxxviii. 23.—Joshua has recorded what terrible slaughter has been made by those missive weapons of the Almighty. Josh. x. 11.—Modern historians relate, that when Edward III. invaded France, a shower of hail-stones descended of such a prodigious size, that six thousand horses, and one thousand men, were struck dead instantaneously.—But the most dreadful description of this great ordnance of the heavens is given us in Rev. xvi. 21. There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent.

this guilty head, poured out his prayers, poured out his sighs, poured out his very soul, for me and my fellow-transgressors—that by virtue of his inestimable propitiation, the overflowings of divine good-will might be extended to sinful men; that the skies might pour down righteousness, and peace on her drowsy wings, peace with her balmy blessings, descend to dwell on earth.

Ye vernal clouds, furls of finer air, folds of softer moisture: He, who draws you in copious exhalations from the briny deep, bids you leave every distasteful quality behind, and become floating fountains of sweetest waters: He, who dissolves you into gentle rain, and dismisses you in fruitful showers; who kindly commissions you to drop down fatness as you fall, and to scatter flowers over the field—He, in the unutterable bitterness of his spirit, was without any comforting sense of his Almighty Father's presence. He, when his bones were burnt up like a firebrand, had not one drop of that sacred consolation, which on many of his afflicted servants has been distilled as the evening dews, and has "given songs in the night" of distress—that, from this unallayed and inconsolable anguish of our all-gracious Master, we, as from a well of salvation, might derive large draughts of spiritual refreshment.

Thou grand ethereal bow, whose beauties flush the firmament, and charm every spectator: He, who paints thee on the fluid skirts of the sky, who decks thee with all the pride of colours, and bends thee into that graceful and majestic figure; at whose command thy vivid streaks sweetly rise, or swiftly fade:—He, through all his life, was arrayed in the humble garb of poverty, and at his exit wore the gorgeous garment of contempt: insomuch, that even his own familiar friends, ashamed, or afraid to own him, "hid as it were their faces from him:"*—to teach us a becoming disdain, for the unsubstantial and transitory glitter

* Isai. liii. 3. כמסתר פנים ממנו Fuit tanquam aliquis, a quo quisque faciem occultaret. He was as some flagitious and abandoned wretch, from whom every one, disdaining such a character, and disclaiming such an acquaintance, studiously hid his face.

of all worldly vanities: to introduce us, in robes brighter than the tinges of thy resplendent arch; even in the robes of his own immaculate righteousness: to introduce us before that august and venerable throne, which the peaceful rainbow surrounds; surrounds as a pledge of everlasting fidelity, and infinite mercy.

Ye storms and tempests, which vex the continent, and toss the seas; which dash navies on the rocks, and drive forests from their roots—He, whose breath rouses you into such resistless fury, and whose nod controls you in your wildest career—He, who holds the rapid and raging hurricane in straightened reins, and walks dreadfully serene, on the very wings of the wind: He went, all meek and gentle, like a lamb to the slaughter for us; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth.—Thus are we instructed to bear, with decent magnanimity, the various assaults of adversity; and to pass, with a becoming tranquillity of temper, through all the rude blasts of injurious treatment. Thus are we delivered from the unutterably fiercer storms of incensed and inexorable justice: from the "fire, the brimstone, and the horrible tempest, which will be the final portion of the ungodly."

Thou pestilence, that scatterest ten thousand poisons from thy baleful wings, tainting the air, and infecting the nations:—under whose malignant influence joy is blasted, and nature sickens; mighty regions are depopulated, and once crowded cities are left without inhabitants—He, who arms thee with inevitable destruction, and bids thee march before* his angry countenance, to spread desolation among the tents of the wicked, and be the forerunner of far more fearful indignation—He, in his holy humanity, was arraigned as a criminal; and though innocence itself, yea, the very pattern of perfection, was condemned to die, like the most execrable miscreant. As a nuisance to society, and the very bane of the public happiness, He was hurried away to execution, and hammered to the

* Before him went the pestilence, *Hab.* iii. 5.

gibbet—that by his blood, He might prepare a sovereign medicine to cure us of a more fatal distemper, than the pestilence which walketh in darkness, or the sickness which destroyeth at noon-day. That he might himself say to our last enemy, "O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction."*

Heat, whose burning influence parches the Libyan wilds, tans into soot the Ethiopian's complexion, and makes every species of life pant, and droop, and languish:—Cold, whose icy breath glazes yearly the Russian seas, often glues the frozen sailor to the cordage, and stiffens the traveller into a statue of rigid flesh—He, who sometimes blends you both, and produces the most agreeable temperature, sometimes suffers you to act separately, and rage with intolerable severity—that King of Heaven, and controller of universal nature, when dwelling in a tabernacle of clay, was exposed to chilling damps, and smitten by sultry beams. The stars, in their midnight watches, heard Him pray; and the sun, in his meridian fervours, saw Him toil.—Hence are our frozen hearts dissolved into a mingled flow of wonder, love, and joy; being conscious of a deliverance from those insufferable flames, which, kindled by divine indignation, burn to the lowest hell.

Thou ocean, vast world of waters! He, who sunk that capacious bed for thy reception, and poured the liquid element into unfathomable channels; before whom all thy foaming billows, and floating mountains, are as the small drop of a bucket:—who, by the least intimation of his will, swells thy fluid kingdoms in wild confusion to mingle with the clouds; or reduces them, in calm composure, to slumber on the shores—He, who once gave thee a warrant to overwhelm the whole earth, and bury all its degenerate inhabitants in a watery grave; but has now laid an everlasting embargo on thy boisterous waves; and bound thee, all fierce and madding as thou art, in chains stronger than adamant, yet formed of despicable sand—

* Hos. xiii. 14.

all the waves of vengeance and wrath, of tribulation and anguish, passed over His crucified body, and His agonizing soul—that we might emerge from those depths of misery, from that abyss of guilt into which we were plunged by Adam's fall, and more irretrievably sunk by our own transgressions—that at the last, we might be restored to that happy world, which is represented, in the vision of God, as having "no sea,"* to denote its perpetual stability, and undisturbed serenity.

Ye mountains, that overlook the clouds, and project a shade into distant provinces:—everlasting pyramids of nature, not to be shaken by conflicting elements, not to be shattered by the bolts of thunder; nor impaired even by the ravages of time—He, who bid your ridges rise so high, and your foundations stand so fast—He, in whose scale you are lighter than dust; in whose eye you are less than nothing—He sunk beneath a load of woes, woes insupportable, but not his own; when He took our iniquities upon himself, and heaved the more than mountainous burden from a guilty world.

Ye verdant woods, that crown our hills, and are crowned yourselves with leafy honours:—ye humble shrubs, adorned in spring with opening blossoms, and fanned in summer by gentle gales—ye that in distant climes, or in cultivated gardens, breathe out spicy odours, and embalm the air with delightful perfumes—your all-glorious and ever-blessed Creator's head was encircled with the thorny wreath, his face was defiled with contumelious spitting, and his body bathed in a bloody sweat—that we might wear the crown, the crown of glory, which fadeth not away; and live for evermore, surrounded with delights, as much surpassing yours, as yours exceed the rugged desolations of winter.

Thou mantling vine,—He who hangs on thy slender shoots the rich, transparent, weighty cluster—who-

* Rev. xxi. 1.

under thy unornamented foliage, and amidst the pores of thy otherwise worthless bough, prepares the liquor—the refined and exalted liquor, which cheers the nations, and fills the cup of joy—Trees, whose branches are elevated and waving in air, or diffused in easy confinement, along a sunny wall—He, who bends you with a lovely burden of delicious fruits, whose genial warmth beautifies their rind, and mellows their taste—He, when voluntarily subject to our wants, instead of being refreshed with your generous juices, or regaled with your luscious pulp, had a loathsome potion of vinegar, mingled with gall, addressed to his lips—that we might sit under the shadow of his merits, with great tranquillity and the utmost complacency: that ere long, being admitted into the paradise of God, we might eat of the tree of life;* and drink new wine with Him in his Father's kingdom.

Ye luxuriant meadows,—He, who without the seedsman's industry, replenishes your irriguous lap with never-failing corps of herbage, and enamels their cheerful green with flowers of every hue—Ye fertile fields, He, who blesses the labours of the husbandman, enriches your well-tilled plains with waving harvests, and calls forth the staff of life from your furrows—He, who causes both meadows and fields to laugh and sing, for the abundance of plenty—He was no stranger to corroding hunger, and parching thirst: He, alas! eat the bitter bread of woe, and had "plenteousness of tears to drink"—that we might partake of richer dainties than those which are produced by the dew of heaven, and proceed from the fatness of the earth—that we might feed on "the hidden manna," and eat the bread which giveth life, eternal life, unto the world.

Ye mines, rich in yellow ore, or bright with veins of silver; that distribute your shining treasures as far as winds can waft the vessel of commerce, that bestow your alms on monarchs, and have princes for your

* Rev. ii. 7.

pensioners—Ye beds of gems, toy-shops of nature! which form, in dark retirement, the glittering stone:—Diamonds, that sparkle with a brilliant water; rubies, that glow with a crimson flame; emeralds, dipped in the freshest verdure of spring; sapphires, decked with the fairest drapery of the sky; topaz, emblazed with the golden gleam; amethyst, impurpled with the blushes of the morning—He, who tinctures the metalic dust, and consolidates the lucid drop; He, when sojourning on earth, had no riches, but the riches of disinterested benevolence; had no ornament but the ornament of unspotted purity—Poor he was in his circumstances, and mean in all his accommodations, that we might be rich in grace, and "obtain salvation with eternal glory"—that we might inhabit the new Jerusalem: that splendid city! whose streets are paved with gold, whose gates are formed of pearl, and the walls garnished with all manner of precious stones.*

Ye gushing fountains, that trickle potable silver through the matted grass—ye fine transparent streams, that glide in crystal waves along your fringed banks—ye deep and stately rivers, that wind and wander in your course to spread your favours wider; that gladden kingdoms in your progress, and augment the sea with your tribute—He, who supplies all your currents from his own ever-flowing and inexhaustible liberality: He, when his nerves were racked with exquisite pain, and his blood inflamed by a raging fever, cried, I thirst; and was denied (unparalleled hardship!) in this his great extremity, was denied the poor refreshment of a single drop of water—that we, having all sufficiency in all things, might abound to every good work; might be filled with the fulness of spiritual blessings here, and hereafter be satisfied with that fulness of joy, which is at God's right hand for evermore.

Ye birds, cheerful tenants of the bough, daily dressed in glossy plumage, who wake the morn, and solace the groves with your artless lays:—inimitable archi-

* Rev. xxi. 19, 21.

tects! who, without rule or line, build your pensile structures, with all the nicety of proportion. You have each his commodious nest, roofed with shades, and lined with warmth, to protect and cherish the callow brood. But He, who tuned your throats to harmony, and taught you that curious skill: He was a man of sorrows, and had not where to lay his head. Had not where to lay his head, till He felt the pangs of dissolution, and was laid in the silent grave—that we, dwelling under the wings of omnipotence, and resting in the bosom of infinite love, might spend an harmonious eternity, in "singing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb."

Bees, industrious workmen! that sweep with busy wing the flowery garden, and search the blooming heath, and sip the mellifluous dews:—strangers to idleness! that ply, with incessant assiduity, your pleasing task; and suffer no opening blossom to pass unexplored, no sunny gleam to slip away unimproved:—Most ingenious artificers! that cling to the fragrant buds, drain them of their treasured sweets, and extract (if I may so speak) even the odoriferous souls of herbs, and plants, and flowers—You, when you have completed your work, have collected, refined, and securely lodged the ambrosial stores: when you might reasonably expect the peaceful fruition of your acquisitions: you, alas! are barbarously destroyed, and leave your hoarded delicacies to others: leave them to be enjoyed by your very murderers. I cannot but pity your hard destiny!—How then should my bowels melt with sympathy, and my eyes flow with tears,* when I remember that thus, thus it fared with your and our incarnate Maker! After a life of the most exemplary and exalted piety, a life filled with offices of beneficence, and labours of love; He was, by wicked hands, crucified and slain! He left the honey of his toil, the balm of his blood, and the riches of his obedience, to be

* Can'st thou, ungrateful man, his torments see,
Nor drop a tear for Him who pour'd his blood for thee?
Pitt's Poems.

shared among others: to be shared even among those, who too often crucify Him afresh, and put him to open shame.

Shall I mention the animal,* which spins her soft, her shining, her exquisitely fine silken thread? whose matchless manufactures lend an ornament to grandeur, and make royalty itself more magnificent?—Shall I take notice of the cell, in which, when the gayety and business of life are over, the little recluse immures herself, and spends the remainder of her days in retirement? —Shall I rather observe the sepulchre, which, when cloyed with pleasure, and weary of the world, she prepares for her own interment? Or how, when a stated period is elapsed, she wakes from a death-like inactivity, breaks the enclosure of her tomb, throws off the dusky shroud, assumes a new form, puts on a more sumptuous array, and from an insect creeping on the ground, becomes a winged inhabitant of the air?—No: this is a poor reptile, and therefore unworthy to serve as an illustration, when any character of the Son of God comes under consideration. But let me correct myself. Was not Christ (to use the language of his own blessed spirit) a worm, and no man?† in appearance such, and treated as such.—Did he not also bequeath the fine linen of his own most perfect righteousness, to compose the marriage-garment for our disarrayed and

* No one, I hope, will be offended at my introducing, on such an occasion, creatures of so low a rank, since even the volumes of inspiration seem to lend me the sanction of their sacred authority; as they disdain not to compare the blessed Jesus to a door, a highway, &c. and perhaps all comparisons, which respect a Being of infinite dignity, are not only mean, but equally mean and unworthy.

I am sensible likewise, that in this paragraph, and some others, all the circumstances are not completely correspondent; but if, in some grand particulars, the reddition answers to the description, this, I trust, will be sufficient for my purpose, and satisfactory to my readers. —Perhaps, it would be no mistaken caution, to apply the same observation to many of the beautiful similitudes, parables and allegories, used by our Lord; such as the brazen serpent, the unjust steward, the thief in the night, &c.; which, if scrupulously sifted, or rigorously strained, for an entire coincidence in every circumstance, must appear to great disadvantage, and lead into palpable inconveniencies.

† Psalm xxii. 6.

defiled souls?* Did he not, before his flesh saw corruption, emerge triumphant from the grave; and not only mount the lower firmament, but ascend the heaven of heavens, and take possession of those sublime abodes in our name, and as our forerunner?

* This, and several other hints, interspersed in this work, refer to the active and passive righteousness of Christ, imputed to believers, for their justification; which, in the opinion of many great expositors, is the mystical and the most sublime meaning of the wedding-garment, so emphatically and forcibly recommended by the teacher sent from God, *Matt.* xxii. 11. A doctrine, which some of those who honour my meditations with a perusal, probably may not receive with much, if any approbation. I hope the whole performance will not be cashiered for one difference in sentiment; and I beg that the sentiment itself may not hastily be rejected without a serious hearing. For I have the pleasure of being intimately acquainted with a gentleman of good learning, and distinguished sense, who had once as strong prepossessions against this tenet, as can well be imagined; yet now, he not only admits it as a truth, but embraces it as the joy of his heart, and cleaves to it as the rock of his hopes.

A clear and cogent treatise, entitled Submission to the Righteousness of God, was the instrument of removing his prejudices, and reducing him to a better judgment; in which he has been happily confirmed by the authority of the most illustrious names, and the works of the most eminent pens, that have ever adorned our Church and nation. In this number are, Bishop Jewel, one of our great reformers; and the other venerable compilers of our homilies, Archbishop Usher, that oracle of universal learning—Bishop Hall, the devout and sprightly orator of his age—the copious and fervent Bishop Hopkins—the singularly good and unaffected Bishop Beveridge—that everlasting honour of the bench of judicature, Lord Chief Justice Hales—the nervous, florid, and persuasive Dean Stanhope—the practical and perspicuous Mr. Burkit—and, to summon no other evidence, that matchless genius Milton; who, in various parts of his divine poem, inculcates this comfortable truth; and in one passage represents it under the very same image which is made use of above, *Book* X. l. 289.

I had almost forgot to mention that the treatise entitled Submission, &c. was written by Mr. Benjamin Jenks; whose book of devotions has deservedly passed through eleven editions; and is truly admirable for the sublimity, spirituality, and propriety of the sentiments, as well as for the concise form, and pathetic turn of the expression.—His book of Meditations, though no less worthy of general acceptance, has for a considerable time been almost unknown and extinct; but is now revived, and is lately republished, in two octavo volumes, by Mr. James Rivington; for which service he has my thanks: I flatter myself he will have the thanks of the public; as I am persuaded, could religion and virtue speak, he would have their acknowledgments also; since few treatises are more happily calculated to represent religion in its native beauty, and to promote the interests of genuine virtue. On which account, I trust, the candid will excuse me, and the judicious will not condemn me, even though the recommendation of those Devotions and of these Meditations, may appear to be a digression from my subject.

N. B. Should the reader be inclined to examine the afore-mentioned tenet, he will find it stated, discussed, and applied to its due improvement, in a piece entitled Theron and Aspasio.

Ye cattle, that rest in your enclosed pastures; ye beasts, that range the unlimited forest; ye fish, that rove through trackless paths of the sea—Sheep, clad in garments, which, when left by you, are worn by kings—Kine, who feed on verdure, which transmuted in your bodies, and strained from your udders, furnishes a repast for queens—Lions, roaring after your prey—Leviathan, taking your pastime in the great deep; with all that wing the firmament, or tread the soil, or swim the wave—He, who spreads his ever-hospitable board, who admits you all to be his continual guests, and suffers you to want no manner of thing that is good: He was destitute, afflicted, tormented: He endured all that was miserable and reproachful, in order to exalt a degenerate race, who had debased themselves to a level with the beasts that perish, unto seats of distinguished and immortal honour, in order to introduce the slaves of sin, and heirs of hell, into mansions of consummate and everlasting bliss.

Surely, the contemplation of such a subject, and the distant anticipation of such a hope, may almost turn earth into heaven, and make even inanimate nature vocal with praise. Let it then break forth from every creature. Let the meanest feel the inspiring impulse, let the greatest acknowledge themselves unable, worthily to express the stupendous goodness.

Praise Him, ye insects, that crawl on the ground; who, though high above all height, humbled himself to dwell in dust. Birds of the air, waft on your wings, and warble in your notes, His praise; who, though Lord of the celestial abodes, while sojourning on earth, wanted a shelter commodious as your nests.—Ye rougher world of brutes, join with the gentle songsters of the shade, and howl to him your hoarse applause; who breaks the jaw-bones of the infernal lion, who softens into mildness the savage disposition, and bids the wolf lie down in amicable agreement with the lamb. Bleat out, ye hills; let broader lows be responsive from the vales: ye forests catch, and ye rocks

retain, the inarticulate hymn; because Messiah the Prince feeds his flock like a shepherd. He gathereth the lambs with his arm; He carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young.*—Wave, ye stately cedars, in sign of worship, wave your branching heads to Him who meekly bowed his own on the accursed tree. Pleasing prospects, scenes of beauty, where nicest art conspires with lavish nature to form a paradise below, lay forth all your charms; and in all your charms confess yourselves a mere blank, compared with His amiableness, who is "fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely!"—Drop down, ye showers, and testify as ye fall; testify of His grace, which descends more copiously than the rain, distils more sweetly than the dew. Let sighing gales breathe, and murmuring rivulets flow; breathe and flow, in harmonious consonance to Him, whose spirit is far more reviving than the cooling breeze; who is Himself the fountain of living waters.

Ye lightnings, blaze to His honour; ye thunders, sound His praise; while reverberating clouds return the roar, and bellowing oceans propagate the tremendous anthem.—Mutest of creatures, add your silent oratory, and display the triumphs of His meekness: who, though He maketh the clouds his chariot, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; though the thunder is his voice, and the lightning his sword of justice; yet, amidst the most abusive and cruel injuries, was submissive and lifted not his hand, was "dumb and opened not his mouth."—Great source of day, address thy radiant homage to a far sublimer sun. Write, in all thy ample round, with every lucid beam, O! write a testimony to Him, who is the brightness of his father's glory; who is the Sun of Righteousness to a sinful world, and is risen, never to go down; is risen, to be our everlasting light.—Shine clear, ye skies; look gay, thou earth; let the floods clap their hands, and let every creature wear a

* Isai. xl. 11.

smile; for He cometh, the Creator himself cometh, to be manifested in the flesh; and with him comes pardon, peace, and joy: every virtue and all felicity comes in his train.—Angels and archangels, let your songs be of Jesus, and teach the very Heavens to echo with his adored and majestic name! Ye beheld Him, with greater transports of admiration, when you attended his agony in the garden, and saw Him prostrate on the ground; than when you beheld universal nature rising at his call, and saw the wonders of his creating might. Tune to loftiest notes your golden harps, and waken raptures, unknown before even in heavenly breasts: while all that has breath, swells the concert of harmony; and all that has being, unites in the tribute of praise.

Chiefly, let man exalt his voice; let man, with distinguished Hosannas, hail the Redeemer. For man, He was stretched on the racking cross; for man, He was consigned to the gloomy sepulchre; for man, He procured grace unmeasurable, and bliss inconceivable. —However different, therefore, in your age, or more different in your circumstances, be unanimous, O men, in magnifying a Saviour, who is no respecter of persons; who gave himself a ransom for all.—Bend, ye kings, from your thrones of ivory and gold; in your robes of imperial purple, fall prostrate at His feet; who forsook a nobler throne, and laid aside more illustrious ensigns of majesty; that you might reign with God for ever and ever.—Children of poverty, meanest of mortals (if any can be called poor who are thus enriched, if any can be accounted mean who are thus ennobled); rejoice, greatly rejoice, in God your Saviour; who chose to be indigent, was willing to be contemned, that you might be entitled to the treasures, and be numbered with the princes of heaven.—Sons of affliction, though harassed with pain, and inured to anguish, O! change your groans into songs of gratitude. Let no complaining voice, no jarring string be heard in the universal symphony; but glorify

the Lamb even in the fires;* who himself bore greater torment than you feel, and has promised you a share in the joy which He inherits: who has made your sufferings short, and will make your rest eternal. —Men of hoary locks, bending beneath a weight of years, and tottering on the brink of the grave, let Christ be your support under all infirmities: lean upon Christ as the rock of your salvation. Let his name, his precious name, form the last accents which quiver on your pale expiring lips; and let this be the first that lisps on your tongues, ye tender infants. Remember your Redeemer in your earliest moments; devote the choicest of your hours to the learning of his will, and the chief of your strength to the glorifying of his name; who, in the perfection of health, and the very prime of manhood, was content to become a motionless and ghastly corpse, that you might be girt with the vigour, and clothed with the bloom, of eternal youth.

Ye spirits of just men made perfect, who are released from the burden of the flesh, and freed from all the vexatious solicitations of corruption in yourselves; delivered from all the injurious effects of iniquity in others; who sojourn no longer in the tents of strife or the territories of disorder, but are received into that pure, harmonious, holy society, where every one acts up to his amiable and exalted character; where God himself is pleased graciously and immediately to preside: you find, not without pleasing astonishment, your hopes improved into actual enjoyment, and your faith superseded by the beatific vision. You feel all your former shyness of behaviour happily lost in the overflowings of unbounded love, and all your little differences of opinion entirely bore down by tides of invariable truth. Bless, therefore, with all your enlarged powers, bless his infinitely larger goodness; who, when He had overcome the sharpness of death, opened the gates of paradise, opened the kingdom of heaven to

* Isai. xxiv. 15.

all generations, and to every denomination of the faithful.

Ye men of holy conversation, and humble tempers, think of Him who loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood. Think of Him on your silent couch; talk of Him in every social interview. Glory in his excellencies; make your boast of his obedience; and add, still continue to add, the incense of a dutiful life to all the oblations of a grateful tongue.—Weakest of believers, who go mourning under a sense of guilt, and conflicting with the ceaseless assaults of temptation, put off your sack-cloth, and be girded with gladness; because Jesus is as merciful to hear, as He is mighty to help; because He is touched with the tenderest sympathizing concern for all your distresses; and He lives, ever lives, to be your advocate with the Father. Why then should uneasy doubts sadden your countenances? Why should desponding fears oppress your souls? Turn, turn those disconsolate sighs into cheerful hymns; since you have his powerful intercession, and his inestimable merits, to be your anchor in all tribulations, to be your passport into eternal blessedness.

Most of all, ye ministers of the sanctuary, heralds commissioned from above, lift every one his voice like a trumpet, and loudly proclaim the Redeemer. Get ye up, ye ambassadors of peace, get ye up into the high mountains, and spread far and wide the honours of the Lamb "that was slain, but is alive for evermore." Teach every sacred roof to resound with his fame, and every human heart to glow with his love. Declare, as far as the force of words will go, declare the inexhaustible fulness of that great atonement, whose merits are commensurate with the glories of the divinity. Tell the sinful wretch, what pity yearns in Immanuel's bowels, what blood he has spilt, what agonies he has endured, what wonders he has wrought, for the salvation of his enemies. Invite the indigent to become rich, entreat the guilty to accept of pardon; because,

with the crucified Jesus is plenteous redemption, and all-sufficiency to save.—While you, placed in conspicuous stations, pour the joyful sound, may I, as I steal through the vale of humble life, catch the pleasing accents! For me, the author of all blessings became a curse: for me, his bones were dislocated, and his flesh was torn: He hung with streaming veins, and an agonizing soul, on the cross for me.* O! may I, in my little sphere, and amidst the scanty circle of my acquaintance, at least whisper these glad transporting things; whisper them from my own heart, that they may surely reach and sweetly penetrate theirs.

But, when men and angels raise the grand hymn, when all worlds, and all beings, add their collective acclamations, this full, fervent, and universal chorus will be so inferior to the riches of the Redeemer's grace, so disproportionate to the magnificence of his glory, that it will seem but to debase the unutterable subject it attempts to exalt. The loud hallelujah will die away in the solemn mental eloquence of prostrate, rapturous, silent adoration.

> O goodness infinite! goodness immense!
> And love that passeth knowledge!—Words are vain;
> Language is lost in wonders so divine.
> "Come then, expressive silence, muse his praise."

* If in this place, and others, I have spoken magnificently of the blood of Christ, and its insuperable efficacy to expiate guilt, I think it is no more than is expressed in a very celebrated hymn, written by one of the greatest wits, who had also been one of the greatest libertines, and afterwards commenced one of the most remarkable penitents, in France. A hymn, which even Mr. Bayle confesses to be a very fine one; which another great critic calls an admirable one; and which a genius, superior to them both, recommends as a noble one. (See *Spect.* Vol. VII. No. 513.)

The author having acknowledged his crimes to be beyond measure heinous, and almost beyond forgiveness provoking; so provoking, as to render tears from such eyes offensive, and prayers from such lips abominable—composes himself to submit, without the least repining sentiment; to submit, even with praise and adoration, to the most dreadful doom: accordingly, he stands in resigned expectation of being instantly struck by the bolts of vengeance; but with a turn of thought equally surprising and sprightly, with a faith properly founded and happily firm, he adds,

> Yet where! O where! can ev'n thy thunders fall?
> Christ's blood o'erspreads and shields me from them all.

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON

THE NIGHT.

Night is fair virtue's immemorial friend:
The conscious moon, through ev'ry distant age,
Has held a lamp to wisdom.

Night-Thoughts, No. V.

TO

PAUL ORCHARD,

OF

STOKE-ABBEY, IN DEVONSHIRE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

As your honoured father was pleased to make choice of me to answer in your name at the font, and to exercise a sort of guardianship over your spiritual interests, permit me, by putting these little treatises into your hand, to fulfil some part of that solemn obligation.

Gratitude for many signal favours, and a conscientious regard to my sacred engagement, have long ago inspired my breast with the warmest wishes, both for your true dignity and real happiness. Nor can I think of a more endearing, or a more effectual way, of advancing either the one or the other, than to set before you a sketch of your excellent father's character.—Illustrious examples are the most winning incitements to virtue; and none can come attended with such particular recommendations to you, Sir, as the pattern of that worthy person from whom you derive your very being.

A most cordial and reverential esteem for the divine word was one of his remarkable qualities. Those oracles of heaven were his principal delight, and his inseparable companions. Your gardens, your solitary walks, and the hedges of your fields can witness,* with what an unwearied

* Josh. xxiv. 27.

inseparable from blooming years, and an elevated situation in life. These are your path, your sure and only path, to true greatness, and solid happiness.—Tread in these steps, and you cannot fail to be the darling of your friends, and the favourite of heaven. Tread in these steps, and you will give inexpressible joy to one of the best of mothers; you will become an extensive blessing to your fellow-creatures; and which, after such most engaging motives, is scarce worthy to be mentioned, you will be the delight, the honour, and the boast of,

Dear Sir,

Your very affectionate godfather,

And most faithful humble servant,

JAMES HERVEY.

Weston-Favell, near Northampton,
July 14, 1747.

PREFACE.

We have already exercised our speculations on the tombs and flowers; surveying nature, covered with the deepest horrors, and arrayed in the richest beauties. Allegory taught many of the objects to speak the language of virtue, while imagination lent her colouring to give the lessons an engaging air.—And this with a view of imitating that divine Instructor; who commissioned the lily,* in her silver suit, to remonstrate in the ear of unbelieving reason: who sent his disciples (men ordained to teach the universe) to learn maxims of the last importance from the most insignificant birds,* that wander through the paths of the air, from the very meanest herbs,* that are scattered over the face of the ground.†

* Matt. vi. 26, 28, 29, 30.

† Celebrated writers, as Demosthenes and Cicero, Thucydides and Livy, are observed to have a style peculiar to themselves.—Now, whoever considers the discourses of Christ, will find him distinguishing himself by a style which may properly be called his own. Majestic, yet familiar;—happily uniting dignity with condescension; it consists, in teaching his followers the sublimest truths, by spiritualizing on the most common occurrences: which, besides its being level to the lowest apprehensions, and admirably adapted to steal into the most inattentive heart, is accompanied with this very singular advantage, that it turns even the sphere of business into a school of instruction, and renders the most ordinary objects a set of monitors, ever soliciting our regard, because ever present to our senses. —So that, I believe, it may be said of this amiable method in which our Lord conveyed, as well as of that powerful energy which attended, his

Emboldened by the kind acceptance of the preceding sketches, I beg leave to confide in the same benevolence of taste, for the protection and support of the two remaining essays; which exhibit a prospect of still life, and grand operation; which moralize on the most composed and most magnificent appearances of things—in which fancy is again suffered to introduce her imagery, but only as the handmaid of truth; in order to dress her person, and display her charms; to engage the attention, and win the love, even of the gay and of the fashionable; which is more likely to be effected by forming agreeable pictures of nature, and deriving instructive observations, than by the laborious method of long-deduced arguments, or close-connected reasonings.—The contemplation of the heavens and the earth, of their admirable properties and beneficial changes, has always afforded the most exalted gratification to the human mind. In compliance with this prevailing taste, I have drawn my serious admonitions from the stupendous theatre, and variegated scenery, of the universe; that the reader may learn his duty from his very pleasures—may gather wisdom, mingled with virtue, from the most refined entertainments and noblest delights.

The evening, drawing her sables over the world, and gently darkening into night, is a season peculiarly proper for sedate consideration. All circumstances concur to

doctrines, That never man spake like this man.—The harvest approaching he reminds his disciples of a far more important harvest, John iv. 35. Matt. xiii. 39, when immortal beings shall be reaped from the grave, and gathered in from all the quarters of the earth; when every human creature shall sustain the character of valuable wheat, or despicable tares; and accordingly be lodged in mansions of everlasting security, or consigned over to the rage of unquenchable fire.—In his charge to fishermen, when they are commencing preachers, Matt. iv. 19, he exhorts them, conformably to the nature of their late occupation, to use the same assiduity and address in winning souls, as they were wont to exercise in catching the finny prey.—For the farther illustration of this no less useful, than curious subject, I would refer my reader to a valuable note in Sir Isaac Newton's Observations on the Prophecies, p. 148. 4to. edition.

hush our passions, and sooth our cares; to tempt our steps abroad, and prompt our thoughts to serious reflection.

——— Then is the time
For those, whom wisdom and whom nature charm,
To steal themselves from the degenerate crowd,
And soar above this little scene of things;
To tread low-thoughted vice beneath their feet;
To sooth the throbbing passions into peace;
And woo lone quiet in her silent walks.—THOMPSON.

The favour I would solicit for the first of the following compositions is, that it may be permitted to attend in such retired and contemplative excursions;—to attend, if not under the character of a friend, at least, in the humble capacity of a servant, or a page—as a servant, to open the door of meditation, and remove every impediment to those best exercises of the mind, which blend advantage with amusement, and improve while they delight—as a page, to gather up the unstable, fluctuating train of fancy; and collect her fickle powers into a consistent, regular, and useful habit of thinking.

The other, conversant among the starry regions, would lead the imagination through those beautiful tracts of unclouded azure, and point out to the judgment some of those astonishing particulars, which so eminently signalize the celestial worlds. A prospect this to which curiosity attracts our eyes, and to which scripture itself often directs our study;—a prospect, beyond all others, most excellently calculated to enlarge the soul, and ennoble its conceptions —to give the grandest apprehensions of the everlasting God, and create sentiments of becoming superiority with relation to all transitory interest; in a word, to furnish faith with the surest foundation for a steady affiance, and true magnanimity of spirit; to afford piety the strongest motives, both for a lively gratitude and profound veneration.

While Galilæo lifts his tube, and discovers the prodigious magnitude of those radiant orbs;—while Newton measures their amazing distances, and unites the whole system in

harmonious order, by the subtle influences of attraction; —I would only, like the herald, before that illustrious Hebrew,† proclaim at every turn, "Bow the knee, and adore the Almighty Maker; magnify his eternal name, and make his praise, like all his works, to be glorious."

† Gen. xli. 43.

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CONTEMPLATIONS

ON

THE NIGHT.

THE business of the day despatched, and the sultry heats abated, invited me to the recreation of a walk; a walk in one of the finest recesses of the country; and in one of the most pleasant evenings which the summer-season produced.

The limes and elms, uniting their branches over my head, formed a verdant canopy, and cast a most refreshing shade. Under my feet lay a carpet of nature's velvet; grass intermingled with moss, and embroidered with flowers. Jasmines, in conjunction with woodbines, twined around the trees, displaying their artless beauties to the eye, and diffusing their delicious sweets through the air. On either side, the boughs, rounded into a set of regular arches, opened a view into the distant fields, and presented me with a prospect of the bending skies. The little birds, all joyous and grateful for the favours of the light, were paying their acknowledgments in a tribute of harmony, and soothing themselves to rest with songs; while a french-horn, from a neighbouring seat, sent its melodious accents, softened by the length of their passage, to complete the concert of the grove.

Roving in this agreeable manner, my thoughts were exercised on a subject still more agreeable than the season or the scene. I mean our late signal victory over the united forces of intestine treason and foreign

invasion;—a victory which pours joy through the present age, and will transmit its influence to generations yet unborn.—Are not all the blessings which can endear society, or render life itself desirable, centred in our present happy constitution and auspicious government? Were they not all struck at, by that impious and horrid blow, meditated at Rome, levelled by France, and seconded by factious spirits at home? Who then can be sufficiently thankful for the gracious interposition of providence; which has not only averted the impending ruin, but turned it, with aggravated confusion, on the authors of our troubles?

Methinks, every thing valuable which I possess; every thing charming, which I behold, conspire to enhance this ever-memorable event. To this it is owing that I can ramble unmolested along the vale of private life, and taste all the innocent satisfactions of a contemplative retirement.—Had rebellion* succeeded in her detestable designs; instead of walking with security and complacence in these flowery paths, I might have met the assassin with his dagger; or have been obliged to abandon my habitation, and "embrace the rock for a shelter."—Farewel then, ye fragrant shades; seats of meditation and calm repose! I should have been driven from your loved retreats, to make way for some barbarous, some insulting victor.—Farewel then, ye pleasing toils, and wholesome amusements of my rural hours! I should no more have reared the tender flower to the sun; no more have taught the espalier to expand her boughs; nor have fetched any longer, from my kitchen-garden, the purest supplies of health.

Had rebellion succeeded in her detestable designs, instead of being regaled with the music of the woods, I might have been alarmed with the sound of the trumpet, and all the thunder of war. Instead of being

* Referring to the rebellion, set on foot in the year 1745;—which, for several months, made a very alarming progress in the north; but was happily extinguished by the glorious and decisive victory at Culloden.

entertained with this beautiful landscape, I might have beheld our houses ransacked, and our villages plundered: I might have beheld our fenced cities encompassed with armies, and our fruitful fields "clothed with desolation;" or have been shocked with the more frightful images of "garments rolled in blood," and of a ruffian's blade, reeking from a brother's heart. Instead of peace, with her cheering olives, sheltering our abodes—instead of justice, with her impartial scale, securing our goods—persecution had brandished her sword, and slavery clanked her chains.

Nor are these miseries imaginary only, or the creatures of a groundless panic. There are, in a neighbouring kingdom, who very lately experienced them in all their rigour.* And, if the malignant spirit of popery had forced itself into our church, if an abjured pretender had cut his way to our throne; we could have no reason to expect a mitigation of their severity on our behalf.—But, supposing the tender mercies of a bigotted usurper to have been somewhat less cruel, where, alas! would have been the encouragement to cultivate our little portion; or what pleasure could arise from an improved spot, if both, the one and the other lay, every moment, at the mercy of lawless power? This imbittering circumstance would spoil their relish; and by rendering them a precarious, would render them a joyless acquisition.—In vain might the vine spread her purple clusters; in vain, be lavish of her generous juices; if tyranny, like a ravenous harpy, should be always hovering over the bowl, and ready to snatch it from the lip of industry, or to wrest it from the hand of liberty.

Liberty, that dearest of names, and property, that best of charters, give an additional, an inexpressible charm, to every delightful object!—See, how the

* See a pamphlet entitled, Popery always the same, which contains a narrative of the persecutions, and severe hardships, lately suffered by the Protestants in the southern parts of France; and closes with a most seasonable, alarming, and spirited address to the inhabitants of Great Britain. Printed 1746. Price 8d.

declining sun has beautified the western clouds, has arrayed them in crimson, and skirted them with gold. Such a refinement of our domestic bliss is property; such an improvement of our public privileges is liberty. —When the lamp of day shall withdraw his beams, there will still remain the same collection of floating vapours, but O! how changed, how gloomy! The carnation streaks are faded, the golden edges are worn away, and all the lovely tinges are lost, in a leaden-coloured, lowering, sadness. Such would be the aspect of all these scenes of beauty, and all these abodes of pleasure, if exposed continually to the caprice of arbitrary sway, or held in a state of abject and cringing dependence.

The sun has almost finished his daily race, and hastens to the goal. He descends lower and lower, till his chariot-wheels seem to hover on the utmost verge of the sky. What is somewhat remarkable, the orb of light, upon the point of setting, grows considerably broader: the shadows of objects, just before they become blended in undistinguishable darkness, are exceedingly lengthened;*—like blessings, little prized while possessed, but highly esteemed the very instant they are preparing for their flight; bitterly regretted when once they are gone, and to be seen no more.

The radiant globe is now half immersed beneath the dusky earth; or, as the ancient poets speak, is shooting into the ocean, and sinks in the western sea.—And could I view the sea, at this juncture, it would yield a most amusing and curious spectacle. The rays, striking horizontally on the liquid element, give it the appearance of floating glass; or, reflected in many a different direction, form a beautiful multiplicity of colours. —A stranger, as he walks along the sandy beech, and, lost in pensive attention, listens to the murmurings of the restless flood, is agreeably alarmed by the gay decorations of the surface. With entertainment, and with wonder, he sees the curling waves, here glistering with white, there glowing with purple; in one place, wear-

* Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.—*Virg.*

ing an azure tincture; in another, glancing a cast of undulating green; in the whole, exhibiting a piece of fluid scenery that may vie with yonder pensile tapestries, though wrought in the loom, and tinged with the dies of heaven.

While I am transported by fancy to the shores of the ocean, the great luminary is sunk beneath the horizon, and totally disappears: the whole face of the ground is overspread with shades; or, with what one of the finest painters of nature calls, a dun obscurity. Only a few very superior eminences are tipt with streaming silver. The tops of groves, and lofty towers, catch the last smiles of day;* are still irradiated by the departing beams.—But O! how transient is the distinction! how momentary the gift! like all the blessings which mortals enjoy below, it is gone almost as soon as granted.—See! how languishingly it trembles on the leafy spire, and glimmers, with a dying faintness, on the mountain's brow. The little vivacity that remains decays every moment. It can no longer hold its station. While I speak, it expires, and resigns the world to the gradual approaches of night.

——— Now twilight gray
Has in her sober liv'ry all things clad.†

Every object, a little while ago, glared with light; but now, all appears under a more qualified lustre. The animals harmonize with the insensible creation; and what was gay in those, as well as glittering in this, gives place to an universal gravity. In the meadows, all was jocund and sportive; but now the gamesome lambs are grown weary of their frolics; and the tired shepherd has imposed silence on his pipe. In the branches, all was sprightliness and song; but now the lively green is wrapt in the descending glooms, and no tuneful airs are heard, only the plaintive stock-dove

* See this remarkable appearance delicately described, and wrought into a comparison, which, in my opinion, is one of the most just, beautiful, and noble pieces of imagery to be found in modern poetry.—*Night-Thoughts*, No. II. p. 42. 4to. edit.

† *Milt. Par. Lost*, B. IV. l. 598.

cooing mournfully through the grove.—Should I now be vain and trifling, the heavens and the earth would rebuke my unseasonable levity! Therefore, be these moments devoted to thoughts sedate as the closing day; solemn as the face of things. And indeed, however my social hours are enlivened with innocent pleasantry, let every evening, in her sable habit, toll the bell to serious consideration. Nothing can be more proper for a person who walks on the borders of eternity, and is hasting continually to his final audit; nothing more proper, than daily to slip away from the circle of amusements, and frequently to relinquish the hurry of business, in order to consider and adjust "the things that belong to his peace."

Since the sun is departed, from whence can it proceed that I am not involved in pitchy darkness? Whence these remainders of diminished brightness? which, though scarcely forming a refulgence, soften and sooth the horrors of night. I see not the shining ruler, yet am cheered with a real, though faint communication of his splendour.—Does he remember us in his progress through other climes? Does he send a detachment of his rays to escort us during his personal absence; or to cover (if I may use the military term) our retreat from the scene of action? Has he bequeathed us a dividend of his beams, sufficient to render our circumstances easy, and our situation agreeable? till sleep pours its soft oppression on the organs of sense; till sleep suspends all the operations of our hands, and entirely supersedes any farther occasion for the light.

No: it is ill-judged and unreasonable, to ascribe this beneficent conduct to the sun. Not unto him, not unto him; but unto his Almighty Maker, we are obliged for this pleasing attendant, this valuable legacy. The gracious author of our Being has so disposed the collection of circumambient air as to make it productive of this fine and wonderful effect. The sun-beams, falling on the higher parts of the aerial fluid, instead

of passing on in straight lines, are bent inwards and conducted to our sight. Their natural course is over-ruled, and they are bidden to wheel about, on purpose to favour us with a welcome and salutary visit; by which means, the blessing of light, and the season of business, are considerably prolonged; and, what is a very endearing circumstance, prolonged most considerably when the vehement heats of summer incline the student to postpone his walk till the temperate evening prevails; when the important labours of the harvest call the husbandmen abroad before the day is fully risen.

After all the ardours of the sultry day, how reviving is this coolness!—This gives new verdure to the fading plants, new vivacity to the withering flowers; and a more exquisite fragrance to their mingled scents.—By this, the air also receives a new force, and is qualified to exert itself with greater activity. Qualified to brace our limbs, to heave our lungs, and to co-operate, with a brisker impulse, in perpetuating the circulation of our blood.—This I might call the grand alembic of nature; which distils her most sovereign cordial, the refreshing dews. Incessant heat would rob us of their beneficial agency, and oblige them to evaporate in imperceptible exhalations. Turbulent winds, or even the gentler motions of Aurora's fan, would dissipate the rising vapours, and not suffer them to form a coalition. But, favoured by the stillness, and condensed by the coolness of the night, they unite in pearly drops, and create that finely-tempered humidity, which cheers the vegetable world, as sleep exhilarates the animal.

Not unlike to these are the advantages of solitude. The world is a troubled ocean; and who can erect stable purposes on its fluctuating waves? The world is a school of wrong; and who does not feel himself warping to its pernicious influences?* On this sea of glass,† how insensibly we slide from our own stead-

* Nunquam a turba mores, quos extuli, refero. Aliquid ex eo quod composui, turbatur: aliquid his quæ fugavi redit. Inimica est multorum conversatio. *Senec.*

† Rev. xv. 2.

fastness! Some sacred truth, which was struck in lively characters on our souls, is obscured, if not obliterated. Some worthy resolution, which heaven had wrought in our breasts, is shaken, if not overthrown. Some enticing vanity, which we had solemnly renounced, again practises its wiles, and again captivates our affections. How often has an unwary glance kindled a fever of irregular desire in our hearts? How often has a word of applause dropt luscious poison into our ears, or some disrespectful expression raised a gust of passion in our bosoms? Our innocence is of so tender a constitution, that it suffers in the promiscuous crowd. Our purity is of so delicate a complexion, that it scarce touches on the world, without contracting a stain. We see, we hear, with peril.

But here safety dwells. Every meddling and intrusive avocation is secluded. Silence holds the door against the strife of tongues, and all the impertinences of idle conversation. The busy swarm of vain images, and cajoling temptations, which beset us, with a buzzing importunity, amidst the gayeties of life, are chased by these thickening shades.—Here I may, without disturbance, commune with my own heart, and learn that best of sciences, to know myself. Here the soul may rally her dissipated powers, and grace recover its native energy.—This is the opportunity to rectify every evil impression; to expel the poison and guard against the contagion of corrupting examples. This is the place where I may, with advantage, apply myself to subdue the rebel within; and be master, not of a sceptre, but of myself.—Throng then, ye ambitious, the levees of the powerful; I will be punctual in my assignations with solitude. To a mind intent upon its own improvement, solitude has charms incomparably more engaging than the entertainments presented in the theatre, or the honours conferred in the drawing-room.

I said, solitude.—Am I then alone?—'Tis true, my acquaintance are at a distance. I have stolen away from

company, and am remote from all human observation. —But that is an alarming thought,

> Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
> Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep.*

Perhaps, there may be numbers of those invisible beings patrolling this same retreat, and joining with me in contemplating the Creator's works. Perhaps, those ministering spirits, who rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, and hold up the goings of the righteous, may follow us to the lonely recess; and, even in our most solitary moments, be our constant attendants.— What a pleasing awe is awakened by such a reflection! How venerable it renders my retired walks! I am struck with reverence, as under the roof of some sacred edifice, or in the presence-chamber of some mighty monarch.—O! may I never bring any pride of imagination, nor indulge the least dissolute affection, where such refined and exalted intelligencies exercise their watch!

'Tis possible that I am encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses; but it is certain that God, the infinite eternal God, is now and ever with me. The great Jehovah, before whom all the angelic armies bow their heads, and veil their faces, surrounds me, supports me, pervades me. "In Him I live, move, and have my being."—The whole world is his august temple; and in the most sequestered corner I appear before his adorable majesty, no less than when I worship in his house, or kneel at his altar. In every place, therefore, let me pay him the homage of a heart cleansed from idols, and devoted to his service. In every circumstance, let me feel no ambition but to please him; nor covet any happiness but to enjoy him.

How sublime is the description, and how striking the sentiment, in that noble passage of the psalms! Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I climb up into the heights

* *Milt.* Par. Lost, B. IV. l. 677.

of heaven, thou art there enthroned in light. If I go down to the depths of the grave, thou art there also in thy pavilion of darkness. If I retire to the remotest eastern climes, where the morning first takes wing; if, swifter than the darting ray, I pass to the opposite regions of the west, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea;* shall I, in that distant situation, be beyond thy reach; or, by this sudden transition, escape thy notice! So far from it, that could I, with one glance of thought, transport myself beyond all the bounds of creation, I should still be encircled with the immensity of thy essence; or rather, still be enclosed in the hollow of thy hand.—Awful, yet delightful truth! Let it be interwoven with every thought! and become one with the very consciousness of my existence! That I may continually walk with God, and conduct myself, in every step of my behaviour, "as seeing him that is invisible."

They are the happy persons—felicity, true felicity, is all their own—who live under an habitual sense of God's omnipresence, and a sweet persuasion of his special love. If dangers threaten, their impregnable defence is at hand. Nothing can be so near to terrify as their Almighty guardian to secure them.—To these, the Hours can never be tedious; and it is impossible for them to be alone. Do they step aside from the occupations of animal life? A more exalted set of employments engage their attention. They address themselves, in all the various acts of devotion, to their heavenly Father; who now sees in secret, and will hereafter reward them openly. They spread all their wants before his indulgent eye, and disburden all their sorrows into his compassionate bosom.—Do they withdraw from human society? They find themselves under the more immediate regards of their Maker. If they

* Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9. There is, I think, an additional strength and beauty in the thought, if, with the learned Mr. Mudge, we suppose an antithesis between the two clauses of the last verse, as there evidently is between those of the preceding; and that they express, in a poetical stile, the extremities of the east and the west.

resign the satisfactions of social intercourse, it is to cultivate a correspondence with the condescending Deity, and taste the pleasures of divine friendship.—What is such a state, but the very suburbs of Heaven? What is such a conduct, but an antepast of eternal blessedness?

Now my soul, the day is ended. The Hours are all fled; they are fled to the supreme judge, and have given in their evidence. An evidence registered in heaven, and to be produced at the great audit.—Happy they, whose improvement has kept pace with the fleeting minutes; who have seized the important fugitives, and engaged them in the pursuit of wisdom, or devoted them to the service of virtue.

Fugitives indeed they are. Our moments slip away silently and insensibly. The thief steals not more unperceived from the pillaged house.—And will the runagates never stop? No: wherever we are, however employed, Time pursues his incessant course. Though we are listless and dilatory, the great measurer of our days presses on, still presses on, in his unwearied career,* and whirls our weeks, and months, and years away.—Is it not then surprisingly strange, to hear people complain of the tediousness of their time, and how heavy it hangs upon their hands? To see them contrive a variety of amusing artifices to accelerate its flight, and get rid of its burden?—Ah! thoughtless mortals! Why need you urge the headlong torrent? Your days are swifter than a post, which, carrying despatches of the last importance, with unremitted speed scours the road. They pass away like the nimble ships, which have the wind in their wings, and skim along the watery plain. They hasten to their destined period with the rapidity of an eagle, which leaves the stormy blasts behind her, while she cleaves the air, and darts upon her prey.†

* Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus.—*Virg.*

† Job. ix. 25, 26. By these three very expressive images, the inspired poet represents the unintermitted and rapid flight of time. The

Now the day is gone, how short it appears! When my fond eye beheld it in perspective, it seemed a very considerable space. Minutes, crowded upon minutes, and hours, ranged behind hours, exhibited an extensive draught, and flattered me with a long progression of pleasures. But, upon a retrospective view, how wonderfully is the scene altered! The landscape, large and spacious, which a warm fancy drew, brought to the test of cool experience, shrinks into a span; just as the shores vanish, and mountains dwindle to a spot, when the sailor, surrounded by skies and ocean, throws his last look on his native land.—How clearly do I now discover the cheat! May it never impose upon my unwary imagination again! I find, there is nothing abiding on this side eternity. A long duration, in a state of finite existence, is mere illusion.

Perhaps, the healthy and the gay may not readily credit the serious truth, especially from a young pen, and new to its employ. Let us then refer ourselves to the decision of the ancient, ask some venerable old person, who is just marching off the mortal stage, how many have been the days of the years of thy life?* It was a monarch's question; and therefore can want no recommendation to the fashionable world.—Observe, how he shakes his hoary locks, and from a deep-felt conviction replies, "Fourscore years have finished their rounds, to furrow these cheeks, and clothe this head in snow. Such a term may seem long and large to inconsiderate youth; but O! how short, how scanty, to one that has made the experiment! Short as a gleam of transient sunshine; scanty as the shadow that departeth. Methinks it was but yesterday that I exchanged my childish sports for manly exercises; and now, I am

passage is illustrated with great judgment, and equal delicacy, in Dr. Gray's most ingenious abridgment of Schultens.—Quæ tribus in elementis velocissima, hic admirabili cum emphasi congeruntur. In terris, nil pernicius cursore, et quidem læti quid ferente. Rapidus tamen adhuc undas, non secant, sed supervolant, navigiola papyro contexta. Omnium rapidissime aerem grandibus aliis permetitur aquila, præcipiti lapsu ruens in prædam.

* *Gen.* xlvii. 8. Heb. Bib.

resigning them both for the sleep of death. As soon as we are born, we begin to draw to our end; and how small is the interval between the cradle and the tomb!" —O! may we believe this testimony of mature age. May every evening bring it, with clearer evidence, to our minds! And may we form such an estimate of the little pittance, while it is upon the advancing hand, as we shall certainly make, when the sands are all run down!

Let me add one reflection on the work to be done, while this shuttle is flying through the loom.* A work of no small difficulty, yet of the utmost consequence!—Hast thou not seen, hast thou not known, the excellent of the earth, who were living images of their Maker? His divine likeness was transfused into their hearts, and beamed forth in all their conduct. Beamed forth in meekness of wisdom, and purity of affection, in all the tender offices of love, and all the nobler efforts of zeal. To be stampt with the same beautiful signature, and to be followers of them, as they were of Christ—this, this is thy business. On the accomplishment of this, thy eternal all depends. And will an affair of such unspeakable weight admit of a moment's delay, or consist with the least remissness?—Especially, since much of thy appointed time is already elapsed, and the remainder is all uncertainty, save only that it is in the very act to fly.—Or, suppose thou hadst made a covenant with the grave, and wast assured of reaching the age of Methuselah; how soon would even such a lease expire! Extend it, if you please, still farther, and let it be co-existent with nature itself; how inconsiderable is the addition! For yet a very little while, and the commissioned Archangel lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by the almighty name, that time shall be no longer.† Then, abused oppor-

* My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle.—*Job.* vii. 6.

† This alludes to the beginning of Revelations the xth; which, abstracted from its spiritual meaning, and considered only as a stately piece of machinery, well deserves our attention; and I will venture to say, has not its superior, perhaps not its equal, in any of the most

tunities will never return, and new opportunities will never more be offered. Then, should negligent mortals wish—wish ever so passionately—for a few hours—a few moments only—to be thrown back from the opening eternity, thousands of worlds would not be able to procure the grant.

Shall I now be industrious to shorten what is no longer than a span, or to quicken the space of what is ever on the wing? Shall I squander away what is unutterably important, while it lasts; and when once departed, is altogether irrevocable! O! my soul, forbear the folly, forbear the desperate extravagance. Wilt thou chide as a loiterer the arrow that boundeth from the string; or sweep away diamonds as the refuse of thy house?—Throw time away! Astonishing, ruinous, irreparable profuseness! Throw empires away, and be blameless—but O! be parsimonious of thy days, husband thy precious hours. They go connected, indis-

celebrated masters of Greece and Rome.—All that is gloomy or beautiful in the atmosphere, all that is striking or magnificent in every element, is taken to heighten the idea. Yet nothing is disproportionate, but an uniform air of ineffable majesty greatens, exalts, ennobles the whole.—Be pleased to observe the aspect of this august personage. All the brightness of the sun shines in his countenance, and all the rage of the fire burns in his feet.—See his apparel. The clouds compose his robe, and the drapery of the sky floats upon his shoulders. The rainbow forms his diadem; and that which "compasseth the heaven with a glorious circle," is the ornament of his head.—Behold his attitude. One foot stands on the ocean, the other rests on the land. The wide extended earth, and the world of waters, serve as pedestals for those mighty columns.—Consider the action. His hand is lifted up to the height of the stars. He speaks; and the regions of the firmament echo with the mighty accents, as the midnight desert resounds with the lion's roar. The artillery of the skies is discharged at the signal, a peal of sevenfold thunder spreads the alarm, and prepares the universe to receive his orders.—To finish all, and give the highest grandeur, as well as the utmost solemnity, to the representation, hear the decree that issues from his mouth. He swears by him that liveth for ever and ever. In whatever manner so majestic a person had expressed himself, he could not fail of commanding universal attention; but when he confirms his speech by a most sacred and inviolable oath, we are not only wrapt in silent suspense, but overwhelmed with the profoundest awe.—He swears, that time shall be no longer. Was ever voice so full of terror, so big with wonder? It proclaims not the fall of empires, but the final period of things. It strikes off the wheels of nature, bids ages and generations cease to roll, and, with one potent word, consigns a whole world over to dissolution.—This is one among a multitude of very sublime and masterly strokes, to be found in that too much neglected book—the Bible.

solubly connected, with heaven or hell.* Improved, they are a sure pledge of everlasting glory; wasted, they are a sad preface to never-ending confusion and anguish.

What a profound silence has composed the world! So profound is the silence, that my very breath seems a noise, the ticking of my watch is distinctly heard! If I do but stir, it creates a disturbance.—There is now none of that confused din from the tumultuous city; no voice of jovial rustics from the neighbouring meadow; no chirping melody from the shady thicket.—Every lip is sealed. Not the least whisper invades the ear; not the least motion rustles among the boughs. Echo herself sleeps unmolested. The expanded ear, though all attention, catches no sound, but the liquid lapse of a distant murmuring stream.

All things are hushed, as Nature's self lay dead.

If, in the midst of this deep and universal composure, ten thousand bellowing thunders should burst over my head, and rend the skies with their united vollies, how should I bear so unexpected a shock? It would stun my senses, and confound my thoughts. I should shudder in every limb; perhaps, sink to the earth with terror.—Consider then, O mortals! consider the much more prodigious and amazing call, which will, ere long, alarm your sleeping bones. When the tenants of the tomb have slumbered, in the most undisturbed repose, for a multitude of ages, what an inconceivable consternation must the shout of the archangel, and the trump of God, occasion! Will it not wound the ear

* I remember to have seen upon a sun-dial, in a physician's garden at Northampton, the following inscription; which, I think, is the most proper motto for the instrument that measures our time, and the most striking admonition that can possibly be presented to every eye that glances upon it,

Ab hoc momento pendet Æternitas.

The weighty sense of which I know not how to express, in English, more happily than in those words of Dr. Watts;

Good God! on what a slender thread
[Or, on what a moment of time]
Hang everlasting things!

of the ungodly, and affright, even to distraction, the impenitent sinner? The stupendous peal will sound through the vast of heaven, will shake the foundations of nature, and pierce even the deepest recesses of the grave. And how—O! how will the prisoners of divine justice be able to endure that tremendous summons to a far more tremendous tribunal!—Do thou, my soul, listen to the still voice of the gospel. Attend, in this thy day, to the gracious invitations of thy Saviour. Then shall that great midnight cry lose its horror, and be music in thy ears. It shall be welcome to thy reviving clay, as the tidings of liberty to the dungeon captive; as the year of jubilee to the harassed slave. This, this shall be its charming import, "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust."*

What a general cessation of affairs has this dusky hour introduced! A little while ago, all was hurry, hurry. Life and activity exerted themselves in a thousand busy forms; the city swarmed with passing and repassing multitudes; all the country was sweat and dust. The air floated in perpetual agitation by the flitting birds and humming bees. Art sat prying with her piercing eyes, while Industry plied her restless hands. —But see, how all this fervent and impetuous bustle is fled with the setting sun. The beasts are slunk to their grassy couch, and the winged people are retired to their downy nests. The hammer has resigned its sounding task, and the file ceases to repeat its flying touches. Shut is the well-frequented shop, and its threshold no longer worn by the feet of numerous customers. The village swain lies drowned in slumbers, and even his trusty dog, who for a considerable time stood centry at the door, is extended at his ease, and snores with his master.—In every place, Toil reclines her head, and Application folds her arms. All interests seem to be forgot, all pursuits are suspended, all employment is sunk away, sunk away with those fluttering myriads which lately sported in the sun's departing

* *Isai.* xxvi. 19.

rays.—'Tis like the sabbath of universal nature, or as though the pulse of life stood still.

Thus will it be, with our infinitely momentous concerns, when once the shadows of the evening (that long evening, which follows the footsteps of death!) are stretched over us. The dead cannot seek unto God; the living, the living alone, are possessed of this inestimable opportunity.* "There is no work or device, no repentance or amendment, in the grave,† whither we are all hasting." When once that closing scene is advanced, we shall have no other part to act on this earthly theatre. Then the sluggard, who has slumbered away life in a criminal inactivity, must lie down in hopeless distress, and everlasting sorrow. Then that awful doom will take place, "He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy for ever."

Is it so, my soul? Is this the only, only time allotted, for obtaining the great reward, and making thy salvation sure? And art thou lulled in a vain security, or dreaming in a supine inadvertency? Start, O! start from thy trance; gird up the loins of thy mind, and

* Behold! Now is the accepted time. Behold! Now is the day of salvation. 2. Cor vi. 2.

> Haste, haste, he lies in wait, he's at the door,
> Insidious death! Should his strong hand arrest,
> No composition sets the pris'ner free.

† They who are gone down to the grave, are represented (*Isai.* xxxviii. 11.) by the phrase, דוּמָה שְׁאוֹל—rendered by Vitringa, Those that inhabit the land of intermission or cessation.—Which prevents all appearance of tautology in the sentence; and is, I think, a valuable improvement of the translation: as it conveys an idea not only distinct from the preceding, but of a very poetical and very afflicting nature; such as was perfectly natural for the royal singer, and royal sufferer, to dwell upon in his desponding moments.—Thus interpreted, the sense will run—"I shall see man no more; I shall be cut off from the cheerful ways of men, and all the sweets of human society. And, what is a farther aggravation of the threatened stroke, I shall, by its taking place, be numbered with those that inherit the land of cessation and inactivity; where there will be no more possibility of contributing to the happiness of my kingdom, no more opportunity of advancing my Creator's glory, or of making my own final salvation sure."—A sentiment like this, is grand, important, and full of benevolence; removes all suspicion of unbecoming pusillanimity, and does the highest honour to the monarch's character.

work while it is day. Improve the present seed-time, that eternity may yield a joyful harvest.—We especially, who are watchmen in Israel, and ministers of the glorious gospel, may we be awakened by this consideration to all assiduity in our holy office. Some or other of our people are ever and anon departing into the invisible state; all our friends are making incessant approaches to their long home, and we ourselves shall very shortly be transmitted to the confinement of the tomb. This is the favourable juncture, wherein alone we can contribute to their endless welfare; this is the crisis, the all-important crisis, of their final felicity. Instantly, therefore, let us pour in our wholesome instructions; instantly, let us ply them with our earnest exhortations. A moment's delay may be an irreparable loss, may be irretrievable ruin. While we procrastinate, a fatal stroke may intervene, and place us beyond the power of administering; or place them beyond all possibility of receiving any spiritual good.*

How frequently is the face of nature changed! and, by changing, made more agreeable!—The long-continued glitter of the day renders the soothing shades of the evening doubly welcome. Nor does the morn ever purple the east with so engaging a lustre as after the gloom of a dark and dismal night.—At present, a calm of tranquillity is spread through the universe. The weary winds have forgot to blow. The gentle gales have fanned themselves asleep. Not so much as a single leaf nods: even the quivering aspin rests; and not one breath curls over the stream.—Sometimes, on the contrary, the tempest summons all the forces of the air, and pours itself, with resistless fury, from the angry north. The whole atmosphere is tossed into tumul-

* The case, represented by the prophet (1 Kings xx. 40.) seems perfectly applicable on this occasion. As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. So, while we are either remiss in our functions, or laying ourselves out upon inferior cares, the people of our charge may be gone:—gone beyond the influence of our counsels; beyond the reach of our prayers:—gone into the unchangeable and eternal state.

tuous confusion, and the watery world is heaved to the clouds. The astonished mariner, and his straining vessel, now scale the rolling mountain, and hang dreadfully visible on the broken surge: now shoot, with headlong impetuosity, into the yawning gulph: and neither hulk nor mast is seen. The storm sweeps over the continent: raves along the city-streets: struggles through the forest-boughs, and terrifies the savage nations with a howl, more wildly horrid than their own. The knotty oaks bend before the blast, their iron trunks groan, and their stubborn limbs are dashed to the ground. The lofty dome rocks, and even the solid tower totters on its basis.

Such variations are kindly contrived, and with an evident condescension to the fickleness of our taste. Because, a perpetual repetition of the same objects would create satiety and disgust; therefore, the indulgent Father of our race has diversified the universal scene, and bid every appearance bring with it the charm of novelty.—This circumstance is beneficial, as well as entertaining. Providence, ever gracious to mortals, ever intent upon promoting our felicity, has taken care to mingle, in the constitution of things, what is pleasing to our imagination with what is serviceable to our interests. The piercing winds, and rugged aspect of Winter, render the balmy gales, and flowery scenes of Spring, peculiarly delightful. At the same time, the keen frosts mellow the soil, and prepare it for the hand of Industry. The rushing rains impregnate the glebe, and fit it to become a magazine of plenty. The earth is a great laboratory, and December's cold collects the gross materials, which are sublimated by the refining warmth of May. The air is a pure elastic fluid; and were it always to remain in this motionless serenity, it would lose much of its active spring. Was it never agitated by those wholesome concussions, it would contract a noisome, perhaps, a pestilential taint. In which cases, our respiration, instead of purifying, would corrupt the vital juices; instead of supplying us with

refreshment, would be a source of diseases; or every gasp we draw might be unavoidable death.*—How then should we admire, how should we adore, that happy union of benignity and wisdom; which, from a variety of dispensations, produces an uniformity of good! Produces a perpetual succession of delights, and an uninterrupted series of advantages!

The darkness is now at its height; and I cannot but admire the obliging manner of its taking place. It comes not with a blunt and abrupt incivility, but makes gentle and respectful advances. A precipitate transition from the splendours of day to all the horrors of midnight, would be inconvenient and frightful. It would bewilder the traveller in his journey; it would strike the creation with amazement; and, perhaps, be pernicious to the organs of sight. Therefore the gloom rushes not upon us instantaneously, but increases by slow degrees; and, sending twilight before as its harbinger, decently advertises us of its approach. By this means, we are neither alarmed, nor incommoded, by the change, but are able to take all suitable and timely measures for its reception.—Thus graciously has providence regulated not only the grand vicissitudes of the seasons, but also the common interchanges of light and darkness, with an apparent reference to our comfort.

Now, the fierce inhabitants of the forest forsake their dens. A thousand grim forms, a thousand growl-

* Considering the immense quantity of coals, and other combustible materials, which are daily consumed, and evaporate into the air—Considering the numberless steams, and clouds of smoke, which almost continually overwhelm populous cities;—the noisome exhalations, which arise from thronged infirmaries, and loathsome jails; from stagnated lakes, and putrid fens;—the variety of offensive and unwholesome effluvia, which proceed from other causes;—it is a very remarkable instance of a providence, at once tenderly kind, and infinitely powerful, that mankind is not suffocated with stench, that the air is not choaked with filth.—The air is the common sewer, into which ten thousand times ten thousand nuisances are incessantly discharged; yet it is preserved so thoroughly clear, as to afford the most transparent medium for vision, so delicately undulatory as to transmit, with all imaginable distinctness, every diversity of sound; so perfectly pure, as to be the constant refiner of the fluids, in every animal that breathes.

ing monsters pace the desert. Death is in their jaws, while stung with hunger, and athirst for blood, they roam their nightly rounds.—Unfortunate the traveller, who is overtaken by the night, in those dismal wilds! How must he stand aghast at the mingled yell of ravenous throats, and lions roaring after their prey! Defend him, propitious heaven! or else he must see his endearing spouse, and hail his native home no more!—Now the prowling wolf, like a murderous ruffian, dogs the shepherd's footsteps, and besets his bleating charge. The fox, like a crafty felon, steals to the thatched cottage, and carries off the feathered booty.

Happy for the world, were these the only destroyers that walk in darkness. But, alas! there are savages in human shapes, who, muffled in shades, infest the abodes of civilized life. The sons of violence make choice of this season* to perpetrate the most outrageous acts of wrong and robbery. The adulterer waiteth for the twilight; and, baser than the villain on the highway, betrays the honour of his bosom-friend. Now, faction forms her close cabals, and whispers her traitorous insinuations. Now, rebellion plans her accursed plots, and prepares the train to blow a nation into ruin. Now crimes, which hide their odious heads in the day, haunt the seats of society, and stalk through the gloom with audacious front. Now the vermin of the stews crawl from their lurking holes, to wallow in sin, and spread contagion through the night. Each soothing himself with the fond notion, That all is safe; that no eyes see.

Are they then concealed? Preposterous madmen! To draw the curtain between their infamous practices and a little set of mortals; but lay them open to all these chaste and wakeful eyes of heaven,† as though the moon and stars were made to light men to their

* ———— When night
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine. *Milt.*

† —— Sed Luna videt, sed sidera testes
Intendunt oculos.

revels, and not to God.—Are they then concealed? No, truly. Was every one of those vigilant luminaries closed, an eye keener than the lightning's flash, an eye brighter than ten thousand suns, beholds their every motion. Their thickest shades are beaming day* to the jealous Inspector, and supreme Judge of human actions.—Deluded creatures! have ye not heard, have ye not read, "that clouds and darkness are his majestic residence?"† In that very gloom, to which you fly for covert, he erects his throne. What you reckon your screen is the bar of his tribunal. O! remember this! Stand in awe, and sin not. Remember that the great and terrible God is about your path,‡ when you take your midnight range; is about your bed, when you indulge the loose desire; and spies out all your ways, be they ever so secretly conducted, or artfully disguised.

Some minutes ago, a passenger crossed along the road. His horse's foot struck the ground, and fetched fire from a flint. My eye, though at a distance, catched the view, and saw with great clearness the transient sparkles; of which, had I been ever so near, I should not have discerned the least glimpse, under the blaze of day.—So,§ when sickness has drawn a veil over the gayety of our hearts, when misfortunes have eclipsed the splendour of our outward circumstances, how many important convictions present themselves with the

* This is finely and very forcibly expressed by the psalmist: If I say, peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day. Or, as it may be rendered somewhat more emphatically, Even the night shall be broad day-light all around me. Psal. cxxxix. 10.

† Psal. xcvii. 2.

‡ The original words are much stronger than the translation. זֵרִיתָ and אֹרְחִי תְסַנֵּן signify, thou siftest my path, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways. The former, I apprehend denoting the exact cognizance which the almighty taketh, the latter implying the constant inspection which he exerciseth, over all the circumstances of our conduct. Psal. cxxxix. 2.

§ I beg leave to inform the young gentleman, whose name dignifies my dedication, that this was a remark of his honoured father, when we rode together, and conversed in a dusky evening. I mention this circumstance, partly to secure the paragraph from contempt; partly, to give him and the world an idea of that eminently serious taste which

brightest evidence: under the sunshine of prosperity, they lay undiscovered; but, when some intervening cloud has darkened the scene, they emerge from their obscurity, and even glitter upon our minds. Then the world, that delusive cheat, confesses her emptiness: but Jesus, the bright and morning-star, beams forth with inimitable lustre. Then vice loses all her fallacious allurements; that painted strumpet is horrible as the hags of hell: but virtue, despised virtue, gains loveliness from a lowering providence, and treads the shades with more than mortal charms.—May this reconcile me, and all the sons of sorrow, to our appointed share of suffering! If tribulation tend to dissipate the inward darkness, and pour heavenly day upon our minds, welcome distress; welcome disappointment; welcome whatever our froward flesh, or peevish passions, would miscal calamities. These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall sit easy upon our spirits; since they befriend our knowledge, promote our faith, and so "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

How has this darkness snatched every splendid and graceful object from my sight! It has dashed the sponge over the pictures of spring, and destroyed all the delicate distinctions of things. Where are now the fine

distinguished my deceased friend.—The less obvious the reflection, the more clearly it discovers a turn of mind remarkably spiritual; which would suffer nothing to escape without yielding some religious improvement. The meaner the incident, the more admirable was the fertility of imagination which could deduce the sublimest truths from the most trivial occurrences.

* 2 Cor. iv. 17. The great Stephens, that oracle of Grecian learning, translates καθ' υπερβολην, Quo nihil majus dici aut fingi potest. But how does the sense rise! How is the idea enlarged, under two such forcible expressions! καθ' υπερβολην εις υπερβολην.—The whole verse is a masterpiece of the beautiful antithesis, the lively description, and the nervous diction. It is one of those exquisite passages in the inspired writings, which, like some rich aromatic plants, cannot be transferred from their own generous and native soil, without being impaired in their vivacity, and losing much of their delicacy. Perhaps the following version may be somewhat less injurious to the sacred original, than the common translation;—our very light affliction, which is but just for the present moment, worketh out a far more exceeding, and incomparably great, and eternal weight of glory.

tinges, which so lately charmed me from the glowing parterre? The blush is struck out from the cheeks of the rose; and the snowy hue is dropt from the lily. I cast my eyes toward a magnificent seat; but the aspiring columns, and fair-expanded front, are mingled in rude confusion. Without the sun, all the elegance of the blooming world is a mere blank; all the symmetry of architecture is a shapeless heap.

Is not this an expressive emblem of the loveliness which the Sun of Righteousness transfuses into all that is amiable? Was it not for Jesus, and his merits, I should sigh with anguish of spirit; even while I rove through ranks of the most beautiful flowers, or breathe amidst a wilderness of sweets. Was it not for Jesus, and his merits, I should roam like some disconsolate spectre, even through the smiles of creation, and the caresses of fortune. My conversation in this world, though dressed in the most engaging forms of external pleasure, would be like the passage of a condemned malefactor, through enamelled meadows and bowers of bliss, to be broke upon the wheel, or to expire on the rack. But a daily reflection on the Lamb's atoning blood, a comfortable trust that my soul is reconciled through this divine expiation; this is the ray, the golden ray, which irradiates the face of the universe. This is the oil of beauty, which makes all things wear a cheerful aspect; and the oil of gladness, which disposes the spectator to behold them with delight.* This, this is

* Thus applied, that fine piece of flattery, addressed to the heathen emperor, is strictly and literally true.

——— Vultus ubi tuus
Affulsit populo, gratior it dies,
Et soles melius nitent. *Horat.*

Which I would cast into a christian mould, and thus translate:

When faith presents the Saviour's death,
And whispers, "This is thine;"
Sweetly my rising hours advance,
And peacefully decline.

While such my views, the radiant sun
Sheds a more sprightly ray;
Each object smiles; all nature charms
I sing my cares away.

the secret charm, which teaches nature in all her prospects, and all her productions, so exquisitely to please.

"Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour, till the evening;" but then his strength fails, his spirits flag, and he stands in need not only of some respite from toil, but of some kindly and sovereign refreshments.—What an admirable provision for this purpose is sleep! Sleep introduces a most welcome vacation, both for the soul and body. The exercises of the brain, and the labours of the hand, are at once discontinued. So that the weary limbs repair their exhausted vigour; while the pensive thoughts drop their load of sorrows, and the busy ones rest from the fatigue of application.—Most reviving cordial! Equally beneficial to our animal and intellectual powers. It supplies the fleshly machine, and keeps all its nice movements in a proper posture for easy play. It animates the thinking faculties with fresh alacrity, and rekindles their ardour for the studies of the dawn. Without these enlivening recruits, how soon would the most robust constitution be wasted into a walking skeleton; and the most learned sage degenerate into a hoary idiot!—Some time ago, I beheld, with surprise, poor Florio: his air was wild, his countenance meagre, his thoughts roving, and speech disconcerted. Inquiring the cause of this strange alteration, I was informed, that for several nights, he had not closed his eyes in sleep. For want of which noble restorative, that sprightly youth, (who was once the life of the discourse, and the darling of the company) is become a spectacle of misery and horror.

How many of my fellow-creatures are, at this very instant, confined to the bed of languishing and complaining, with that illustrious sufferer of old, Wearisome nights are appointed to me!* Instead of indulging soft repose, they are counting the tedious hours; telling every striking clock; or measuring the very moments by their throbbing pulse. How many, harassed with

* Job vii. 3.

pain, most passionately long to make some little truce with their agonies in peaceful slumbers! How many, sick with disquietude, and restless even on their downy pillows, would purchase this transient oblivion of their woes, almost at any rate!—That which wealth cannot procure, which multitudes sigh for in vain, thy God has bestowed on thee, times out of number. The welcome visitant, punctual at the needed hour, has entered thy chamber, and poured his poppies round thy couch; has gently closed thy eye-lids, and shed his slumberous dews over all thy senses.

Since sleep is so absolutely necessary, so inestimably valuable, observe what a fine apparatus Almighty goodness has made, to accommodate us with the balmy blessing. With how kind a precaution He removes whatever might obstruct its access, or impede its influence! He draws around us the curtain of darkness, which inclines us to a drowsy indolence, and conceals every object that might too strongly agitate the sense. He conveys peace into our apartments, and imposes silence on the whole creation. Every animal is bidden to tread softly, or rather to cease from its motion, when man is retiring to his repose. May we not discern, in this gracious disposition of things, the tender cares of a nursing-mother, who hushes every noise, and secludes every disturbance, when she has laid the child of her love to rest? So, by such soothing circumstances, and gently-working opiates, he giveth to his beloved sleep.*

Another signal instance of a Providence intent upon our welfare, is, that we are preserved safe in the hours of slumber. How are we then lost to all apprehension of danger; even though the murderer be at our bedside, or his naked sword at our breast! Destitute of all concern for ourselves, we are unable to think of, much more to provide for, our own security. At these moments, therefore, we lie open to innumerable perils: perils from the resistless rage of flames; perils from the

* Psal. cxxvii. 2.

insiduous artifices of thieves, or the outrageous violence of robbers: perils from the irregular workings* of our own thoughts, and especially from the incursions of our spiritual enemy.

What dreadful mischief might that restless, that implacable adversary of mankind work, was there not an invisible hand to control his rage, and protect poor mortals? What scenes of horror might he represent to our imaginations, and "scare us with dreams, or terrify us with visions!"† But the keeper of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps, interposes in our behalf, at once to cherish us under his wings, and to defend us as with a shield. It is said of Solomon, "that threescore valiant men were about his bed, all expert in war; every one with his sword upon his thigh, because of

* I think, it is referable only to a superintending and watchful providence, that we are not hurried into the most pernicious actions, when our imagination is heated, and our reason stupified by dreams.—We have sometimes heard of unfortunate persons, who, walking in their sleep, have thrown themselves headlong from a window, and been dashed to death on the pebbles. And whence is it, that such disastrous accidents are only related as pieces of news, not experienced by ourselves, or our families? Were our minds more sober in their operations, or more circumspect in their regards? No, verily: Nothing could be more wild than their excursions; and none could be more inattentive to their own welfare. Therefore, if we have laid us down and slept in peace, it was because the Lord vouchsafed us the sweet refreshment: if we rose again in safety, it was because the Lord sustained us with his unremitted protection.

Will the candid reader excuse me, if I add a short story; or rather a matter of fact, suitable to the preceding remark?—Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream; and having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag. Upon this, he cries out, with a determined ardour, I'll kill him, I'll kill him: and immediately feels for the knife, which he carried in his pocket. His companion happening to awake, and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger, and the moon shining into the room, he stood to view the event. When, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place, where, a moment before, the throat and the life of his friend lay.—This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us even from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep; only the preventing care of our heavenly Father.

† What a complete master that malignant spirit is, in exhibiting visionary representations, appears from his conduct towards Christ, on the high mountain: and that he is too ready, if not restrained by an overruling power, to employ his dexterity in afflicting mankind, is evident, from his treatment of Job. See Luke iv. 5. Job. vii 14.

fear in the night."* But one greater than Solomon, one mightier than myriads of armed hosts, even the great Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength; He vouchsafes to encamp about our houses, to watch over our sleeping minutes, and to stop all the avenues of ill. —O! the unwearied and condescending goodness of our Creator! who lulls us to our rest, by bringing on the silent shades, and plants his own ever-watchful eye as our centinel, while we enjoy the needful repose.

Reason now resigns her sedate office; and fancy, extravagant fancy, leads the mind through a maze of vanity. The head is crowded with false images, and tantalized with the most ridiculous misapprehensions of things. Some are expatiating amidst fairy fields, and gathering garlands of visionary bliss, while their bodies are stretched on a wisp of straw, and sheltered by the cobwebs of a barn. Others, quite insensible of their rooms of state, are mourning in a doleful dungeon, or struggling with the raging billows. Perhaps, with hasty steps, they climb the craggy cliff; and, with real anxiety, fly from the imaginary danger. Or else, benumbed with sudden fear, and finding themselves unable to escape, they give up at once their hopes and their efforts; and, though reclined on a couch of ivory, are sinking, all helpless and distressed, in the furious whirlpool. So unaccountable are the vagaries of the brain, while sleep maintains its dominion over the limbs!

But is this the only season when absurd and incoherent irregularities play their magic on our minds? Are there not those who dream even in their waking moments?—Some pride themselves in a notion of superior excellency, because the royal favour has annexed a few splendid titles to their names; or because the dying silkworm has bequeathed her finest threads to cover their nakedness.—Others congratulate their own signal happiness, because loads of golden lumber are amassed together in their coffers; or promise themselves a most

* Cant. iii. 7, 8.

superlative felicity indeed, when some thousands more are added to the useless heap.—Nor are there wanting others, who gape after substantial satisfaction from airy applause; and flatter themselves with, I know not what, immortality in the momentary buzz of renown.—Are any of these a whit more reasonable in their opinions than the poor ragged wretch in his reveries; who, while snoring under a hedge, exults in the possession of his stately palace, and sumptuous furniture?—If persons, who are very vassals to their own domineering passions, and led captive by numberless temptations; if these persons pique themselves with a conceit of their liberty, and fancy themselves the generous and gallant spirits of the age; where is the difference between theirs and the madman's frenzy; who, though chained to the floor, is throned in thought, and wielding an imaginary sceptre?—In a word, as many as borrow their dignity from a plume of feathers, or the gaudy trappings of fortune; as many as send their souls to seek for bliss in the blandishments of sense, or in any thing short of the divine favour, and a well-grounded hope of the incorruptible inheritance;* what are they, but dreamers with their eyes open; delirious, though in health?

Would you see their picture drawn to the very life, and the success of their schemes calculated with the utmost exactness, cast your eye upon that fine representation exhibited by the prophet: It shall be even as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.† Such is the race, and such the prize, of all those candidates for honour and joy, who run wide from the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They live in vanity, and die in woe.—Awaken us, merciful

* These give a sacred and home-felt delight,
A sober certainty of waking bliss *Milt* Comus.

† Isai. xxix. 8.

Lord, from these noon-tide trances! Awaken us, while conviction may turn to our advantage, and not serve only to increase our torment. O! let our "eyes be enlightened to discern the things that are excellent;" and no longer be imposed upon by fantastic appearances, which, however pompous they may seem, will prove more empty than the visions of the night, more transient than the dream that is forgotten.

Having mentioned sleep and dreams, let me once again consider those remarkable incidents of our frame; so very remarkable, that I may venture to call them a kind of experimental mystery, and little less than a standing miracle. Behold the most vigorous constitution, when stretched on the bed of ease, and totally resigned to the slumbers of the night: its activity is oppressed with fetters of indolence; its strength is consigned over to a temporary annihilation; the nerves are like a bow unstrung, and the whole animal system is like a motionless log.—Behold a person of the most delicate sensations, and amiable dispositions: his eyes, though thrown wide open, admit not the visual ray; at least, distinguish not objects. His ears with the organs unimpaired, and articulate accents beating upon the drum, perceive not the sound; at least, apprehend not the meaning. The senses, and their exquisitely fine feelings, are overwhelmed with an unaccountable stupefaction. You call him a social creature, but where are his social affections? He knows not the father that begat him, and takes no notice of the friend that is as his own soul. The wife of his bosom may expire by his side, and he lie no more concerned than a barbarian: the children of his body may be tortured with the severest pangs, and he, even in the same chamber, remain untouched with the least commiseration.—Behold the most ingenious scholar; whose judgment is piercing, and able to trace the most intricate difficulties of science; his taste refined, and quick to relish all the beauties of sentiment and composition: yet, at this juncture, the thinking faculties are unhinged, and the

intellectual economy quite disconcerted. Instead of close-connected reasonings, nothing but a disjointed huddle of absurd ideas: instead of well-digested principles, nothing but a disorderly jumble of crude conceptions. The most palpable delusions impose upon his imagination. The whole night passes, and he frequently mistakes it for a single minute; is not sensible of the transition, hardly sensible of any duration.

Yet, no sooner does the morning dawn, and daylight enter the room, but this strange enchantment vanishes. The man awakes, and finds himself possessed of all the valuable endowments, which for several hours, were suspended or lost: his sinews are braced, and fit for action: his senses are alert and keen: the romantic visionary brightens into the master of reason: the frozen or benumbed affections melt with tenderness, and glow with benevolence: and, what is beyond measure surprising, the intoxicated mind works itself sober, not by slow degrees, but in the twinkling of an eye recovers from its perturbation.—Why does not the stupor, which deadens all the nice operations of the animal powers, hold fast its possession? When the thoughts are once disadjusted, why are they not always in confusion? How is it, that they are rallied in a moment; and, from the wildest irregularity, reduced to the most orderly array?—From an inactivity, resembling death, how is the body so suddenly restored to vigour and agility? From extravagancies, bordering upon madness, how is the understanding instantaneously re-established in sedateness and harmony?—Surely, "this is the Lord's doing, and it should be marvellous in our eyes:" should awaken our gratitude, and inspirit our praise.

This is the time in which ghosts are supposed to make their appearance. Now the timorous imagination teems with phantoms, and creates numberless terrors to itself. Now dreary forms in sullen state, stalk along the gloom; or, swifter than lightning, glide across

the shades. Now voices more than mortal * are heard from the echoing vaults, and groans issue from the hollow tombs. Now melancholy spectres visit the ruins of ancient monasteries, and frequent the solitary dwellings of the dead. They pass and repass, in unsubstantial images, along the forsaken galleries; or take their determined stand over some lamented grave. How often has the school-boy fetched a long circuit, and trudged many a needless step, in order to avoid the haunted church-yard? Or, if necessity, sad necessity, has obliged him to cross the spot where human skulls are lodged below, and the baleful yews shed supernumerary horrors above, a thousand hideous stories rush into his memory: fear adds wings to his feet; he scarce touches the ground; dares not once look behind him; and blesses his good fortune, if no frightful sound purred at his heels, if no ghastly shape bolted upon his sight.

'Tis strange to observe the excessive timidity which possesses many people's minds on this fanciful occasion, while they are void of all concern on others of the most tremendous import. Those who are startled, in any dark and lonely walk, at the very apprehension of a single spectre, are nevertheless unimpressed at the sure prospect of entering into a whole world of disembodied beings. Nay, are without any emotions of awe, though they know themselves to be hastening into the presence of the great, infinite, and eternal Spirit.—Should some pale messsenger from the regions of the dead, draw back our curtains at the hour of midnight, and, appointing some particular place, say, as the horrid apparition to Brutus, I'll meet thee there:† I believe, the boldest heart would feel something like a

* Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes
Ingens, et simulacra modis pallentia miris
Visa sub obscurum noctis.— *Virg.*

† The story of Brutus, and his evil genius, is well known. Nor must it be denied, that the precise words of the spectre to the hero were, I'll meet thee at Philippi. But, as this would not answer my purpose, I was obliged to make an alteration in the circumstance of place.

panic; would seriously think upon the adventure, and be in pain for the event; but when a voice from heaven cries, in the awakening language of the prophet, Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel;* how little is the warning regarded! how soon is it forgot! Preposterous stupidity! to be utterly unconcerned, where it is the truest wisdom to take the alarm; and to be all trepidation, where there is nothing really terrible! —Do thou, my soul, remember thy Saviour's admonition; "I will forewarn you, whom you shall fear. Fear not these imaginary horrors of the night; but fear that awful Being, whose revelation of himself, though with expressions of peculiar mercy, made Moses, his favourite servant, tremble exceedingly. Whose manifestation, when He appears with purposes of inexorable vengeance, will make mighty conquerors, who were familiar with dangers, and estranged to dismay, call upon the mountains to fall on them, and the rocks to cover them. The menace of whose majestic eye, when He comes, attended with thousand thousands of his immortal hosts, will make the very heavens cleave asunder, and the earth flee away.—O! dread his displeasure; secure his favour; and then thou mayest commit all thy other anxieties to the wind. Thou mayest laugh at every other fear."

This brings to my mind a memorable and amazing occurrence, recorded in the book of Job,† which is, I think, no inconsiderable proof of the real existence of apparitions,‡ on some very extraordinary emergen-

* Amos iv. 12. † Job iv. 12, 14, &c.

‡ Is a proof of the real existence of apparitions, if the sense in which I have always understood this passage be true. Eliphaz, I apprehend, was neither in a trance, nor in a dream, but perfectly awake.—Though he speaks of sleep, he speaks of it as fallen not upon himself, but upon other men: he does not mention dreams, though חלומות somnia would have suited the verse (if the book be in metre) altogether as well as חזיונות visiones. It could not surely be a wind, as some translate the word רוח, because the circumstance of standing still is not so compatible with the nature of a wind; and a wind would have passed above him, all around him, as well as before him. Not to add, how low a remark it is, and how unworthy of a place in so august a description, that he could not discern the form of a wind. It seems, therefore, to have been a real spirit; either angel-

cies; while it discountenances those legions of idle tales, which superstition has raised, and credulity received. Since it teaches us, that, if at any time those visitants from the unknown world render themselves perceivable by mortals, it is not upon any errand of frivolous consequence, but to convey intelligences of the utmost moment, or to work impressions of the highest advantage.

'Twas in the dead of night, all nature lay shrouded in darkness; every creature was buried in sleep; the most profound silence reigned through the universe. In these solemn moments, Eliphaz alone, all wakeful and solitary, was musing upon sublime and heavenly subjects: when, lo! an awful being, from the invisible realms, burst into his apartment.* A spirit passed before his face; astonishment seized the beholder: his bones shivered within him; his flesh trembled all over him; and the hair of his head stood erect with horror. Sudden and unexpected was the appearance of the phantom; not such its departure. It stood still, to present itself more fully to his view; it made a solemn pause, to prepare his mind for some momentous message. After which, a voice was heard; a voice, for the importance of its meaning, worthy to be had in

cal as were those which presented themselves to Abraham, resting at the door of his tent, and to Lot, sitting in the gate of Sodom; or else the spirit of some departed saint, as in the case of Samuel's apparition, or the famous appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration.—A spirit assuming some vehicle, in order to become visible to the human eye; which accordingly Eliphaz saw, exhibiting itself as an object of sight: but saw so obscurely and indistinctly, that he was not able either to describe its aspect, or to discern whom it resembled.

* I have given this solemn picture a modern dress, rather for the sake of variety and illustration, than from any apprehension of improving the admirable original. Such an attempt, I am sensible, would be more absurdly vain than to attempt to lacker gold, or paint the diamond. The description, in Eliphaz's own language, is awful and affecting to the last degree. A night-piece, dressed in all the circumstances of the deepest horror. I question whether Shakespeare himself, though so peculiarly happy for his great command of terrifying images, has any thing superior or comparable to this. The judges of fine composition see the masterly strokes; and, I believe, the most ordinary reader feels them chilling his blood, and awakening emotions of dread in his mind.

everlasting remembrance; for the solemnity of its delivery, enough to alarm a heart of stone. It spoke, and this was the purport of its words: "Shall man, frail man, be just before the mighty God? Shall even the most accomplished of mortals be pure in the sight of his Maker?* behold, and consider it attentively. He put no such trust in his most exalted servants, as should bespeak them incapable of defect. And his very angels He charged with folly, as sinking, even in the highest perfection of their holiness, infinitely beneath his transcendent glories; as falling, even in all the fidelity of their obedience, inexpressibly short of the homage due to his adorable majesty. If angelic natures must not presume to justify either themselves, or their services, before uncreated purity; how much more absurd is such a notion, how much more impious such an attempt, in them that dwell in houses of clay; whose original is from the dust, and whose state is all imperfection!"

I would observe from hence, the very singular necessity of that poverty of spirit, which entirely renounces its own attainments; and most thankfully submits to the righteousness of the incarnate God. To inculcate this lesson, the Son of the blessed came down from heaven, and pressed no other principle with so repeated† an importunity on his hearers. To

* There seems to be a significant and beautiful gradation in the Hebrew words אנוש and גבר, which I have endeavoured to preserve by a sort of paraphrastic version. The reader will observe a new turn given to the sentiment; preferable, I think, to that which our English translation exhibits.—Not, Shall man be more just than God? But, Shall man be just before, or in the sight of God? The passage thus rendered, speaks a truth incomparably more weighty, and needful to be inculcated. A truth exactly parallel to that humbling confession of the prophet; We are all as an unclean thing; and to that solemn declaration of the psalmist, In thy sight shall no man living be justified.

† It is well worthy of our observation, says an excellent commentator, "That no one sentence uttered by our Lord, is so frequently repeated as this; Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted." Which often occurs in the Evangelists, but is never duly accomplished in us, till we disclaim all pretensions to merit and righteousness of our own, and seek them only in the atonement and obedience of Jesus Christ.

instil the same doctrine, the Holy Ghost touched the lips of the apostles with sacred eloquence; and made it an eminent part of their commission, "to demolish every high imagination." That no expedient might be wanting, to give it a deep and lasting efficacy on the human mind, a phantom arises from the valley of the shadow of death, or a teacher descends from the habitation of spirits. Whatever then we neglect, let us not neglect to cultivate this grace, which has been so variously taught, so powerfully enforced.

Hark! a doleful voice—with sudden starts, and hideous screams, it disturbs the silence of the peaceful night: it is the screech-owl, sometimes in frantic, sometimes in disconsolate accents, uttering her woes.* She flies the vocal grove, and shuns the society of all the feathered choir. The blooming gardens and flowery meads have no charms for her. Obscure shades, ragged ruins, and walls overgrown with ivy, are her favourite haunts. Above, the mouldering precipice nods, and threatens a fall: below, the toad crawls, or the poisonous adder hisses. The sprightly morning, which awakens other animals into joy, administers no pleasure to this gloomy recluse: even the smiling face of day is her aversion; and all its lovely scenes create nothing but uneasiness.

So, just so, would it fare with the ungodly, were it possible to suppose their admission into the chaste and bright abodes of endless felicity: they would find nothing but disappointment and shame, even at the fountain-head of happiness and honour. For, how could the tongue, habituated to profaneness, taste any delight in the harmonious adorations of heaven? How could the lips, cankered with slander, relish the raptures of everlasting praise? Where would be the satisfaction of

* Solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo
Sæpe queri, longasque in fletum ducere voces.

Thus sung that charming genius, that prince of the ancient poets, that most consummate master of elegance and accuracy; all whose sentiments are nature, whose every description is a picture, whose whole language is music—*Virg.*

the vain beauty, or the supercilious grandee? since, in the temple of the skies, no incense of flattery would be addressed to the former, nor any obsequious homage paid to the latter. The spotless and inconceivable purity of the blessed God would flash confusion on the lascivious eye. The envious mind must be on a rack of self-tormenting passions, to observe millions of happy beings, shining in all the perfections of glory, and solacing themselves in the fulness of joy. In short, the unsanctified soul, amidst holy and triumphant spirits, even in the refined regions of bliss and immortality, would be like this melancholy bird, dislodged from her darksome retirement, and imprisoned under the beams of day.*

The voice of this creature screaming at our windows, or of the raven croaking over our houses, is, they say, a token of approaching death. There are persons who would regard such an incident with no small degree of solicitude. Trivial as it is, it would damp their spirits, perhaps break their rest. One cannot but wonder, that people should suffer themselves to be affrighted at such fantastical, and yet be quite unaffected with real presages of their dissolution: real presages of this awful event address us from every quarter. What are these incumbent glooms, which overwhelm the world, but a kind of pall provided for nature; and an image of that long night, which will quickly cover the inhabitants of the

* I would beg of the reader to observe with what emphasis and propriety our Lord touches this important point, in his memorable reply to Nicodemus. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven: *q. d.* "I wave the authority of the Supreme Judge, and speak with the condescension of a teacher in Israel. Though I might, without being liable to the least controul, pass it into a sovereign decree; that unrenewed mortals, who are slaves to corrupt appetite, shall not enter the habitations of the just; I rather choose to represent it as a case utterly impossible; and charge the calamity, not upon divine severity, but upon human folly. Such persons, from the very nature of things, preclude themselves; they incapacitate their own minds; and contrarieties must be reconciled, before they, in their unregenerate condition, can be partakers of those spiritual and sublime delights."—*John* iii. 3.

whole earth? What an affinity has the sleep,* which will very soon weigh down my drowsy eye-lids, with that state of entire cessation, in which all my senses must be laid aside! The silent chamber, and the bed of slumber, are a very significant representation of the land where all things are hushed, all things are forgotten. What meant that deep death-bell note, which, the other evening, saddened the air? Laden with heaviest accents, it struck our ears, and seemed to knock at the door of our hearts. Surely, it brought a message to surviving mortals, and thus the tidings ran: "Mortals, the destroyer of your race is on his way: the last enemy has begun the pursuit, and is gaining ground upon you every moment. His paths are strewed with heaps of slain. Even now his javelin has laid one of your neighbours in the dust; and will soon, very soon, aim the inevitable blow at each of your lives."

We need not go down to the charnel-house, nor carry our search into the repositories of the dead, in order to find memorials of our impending doom. A multitude of these remembrancers are planted in all our paths, and point the heedless passengers to their long home. I can hardly enter a considerable town, but I meet the funeral procession, or the mourners going about the streets. The hatchment suspended on the wall, or the crape streaming in the air, are silent intimations that both rich and poor have been emptying their houses, and replenishing their sepulchres. I can scarce join in any conversation, but mention is made of some that are given over by the physician, and hovering on the confines of eternity; of others, that have just dropt their clay amidst weeping friends, and are gone to appear before the Judge of all the earth. There is not a newspaper comes to my hand but, amidst all its entertaining narrations, reads several serious lectures of mortality. What else are the repeated accounts of age, worn out by slow-consuming

* Et consanguineus lethi sopor.—*Virg.*

sicknesses—of youth, dashed to pieces by some sudden stroke of casualty—of patriots, exchanging their seats in the senate for a lodging in the tomb—of misers, resigning their breath, and (O relentless destiny!) leaving their very riches for others? Even the vehicles of our amusement are registers of the deceased; and the voice of fame seldom sounds but in concert with a knell.

Those monitors crowd every place, not so much as the scenes of our diversion excepted. What are the decorations of our public buildings, and the most elegant furniture of our parlours, but the imagery of death, and trophies of the tomb? That marble bust, and those gilded pictures, how solemnly they recognize the fate of others, and speakingly remind us of our own! I see, I hear, and O! I feel this great truth: it is interwoven with my constitution. The frequent decays of the structure foretell its final ruin. What are all the pains, that have been darted through my limbs, what every disease, that has assaulted my health; but the advanced guards of the foe? What are the languors and weariness, that attend the labours of each revolving day, but the more secret practices of the adversary, slowly undermining the earthly tabernacle?

Amidst so many notices, shall we go on thoughtless and unconcerned? Can none of these prognostics, which are sure as oracles, awaken our attention, and engage our circumspection? Noah, it is written, being warned of God, prepared an ark. Imitate, my soul, imitate this excellent example. Admonished by such a cloud of witnesses, be continually putting thyself in a readiness for the last change. Let not that day, of which thou hast so many infallible signs, come upon thee unawares.—Get the ivy untwined, and thy affections disentangled from this enchanting world, that thou mayest be able to quit it without reluctance. Get the dreadful hand-writing cancelled, and all thy sins blotted out, that thou mayest depart in peace, and have

nothing to fear at the decisive tribunal. Get, O! get thyself interested in the Redeemer's merits, and transformed into his sacred image; then shalt thou be meet for the inheritance of saints in light, and mayest even desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.

Sometimes, in my evening walk, I have heard

> The wakeful bird
> Sing darkling, and, in shadiest covert hid,
> Tune her nocturnal note.*

How different the airs of this charming songster, from those harsh and boding outcries! The little creature ran through all the variations of music, and showed herself mistress of every grace which constitutes or embellishes harmony.—Sometimes she swells a manly throat, and her song kindles into ardour. The tone is so bold, and strikes with such energy, you would imagine the sprightly serenader in the very next thicket. Anon the strain languishes, and the mournful warbler melts into tenderness. The melancholy notes just steal upon the shades, and faintly touch your ear; or, in soft and sadly-pleasing accents, they seem to die along the distant vale. Silence is pleased, and night listens to the trilling tale.

What an invitation is this, to slip away from the thronged city! This coy and modest minstrel entertains only the lovers of retirement. Those who are carousing over their bowls, or ranting at the riotous club, lose this feast of harmony.—In like manner, the pleasures of religion, and the joy of reconciliation with God; the satisfaction arising from an established interest in Christ, and from the prospect of a blissful immortality: these are all lost to the mind that is ever in the crowd; and dares not, or delights not, to retire into itself.—Are we charmed with the nightingale's song? Do we wish to have it nearer, and hear it oftener? Let us seek a renewed heart, and a resigned will; a conscience that whispers peace, and passions

* *Milt.* Par. Lost, B. 3. l. 38.

that are tuned by grace. Then shall we never want a melody in our own breasts, far more musically pleasing than sweet Philomela's sweetest strains.

As different as the voices of these birds, are the circumstances of those few persons who continue awake. —Some are squandering pearls, shall I say, or kingdoms? No: but what is unspeakably more precious, time: squandering this inestimable talent, with the most senseless and wanton prodigality. Not content with allowing a few spare minutes for the purpose of necessary recreation, they lavish many hours, devote whole nights, to that idle diversion of shuffling, ranging, and detaching a set of painted pasteboards.—Others, instead of this busy trifling, act the part of their own tormentors. They even piquet themselves,* and call it amusement; they are torn by wild horses, yet term it a sport. What else is the gamester's practice? His mind is stretched on the tenter-hooks of anxious suspence, and agitated by the fiercest extremes of hope and fear. While the dice are rattling, his heart is throbbing; his fortune is tottering; and possibly, at the very next throw, the one sinks in the gulph of ruin, the other is hurried into the rage of distraction.

Some, snatched from the bloom of health, and the lap of plenty, are confined to the chamber of sickness; where they are constrained, either to plunge into the everlasting world in an unprepared condition; or else (sad alternative!) to think over all the follies of a heedless life, and all the bitterness of approaching death. The disease rages; it baffles the force of medicine; and urges the reluctant wretch to the brink of the precipice. While furies rouse the conscience, and point at the bottomless pit below.—Perhaps his drooping mother, deprived long ago of the husband of her bosom, and bereft of all her other offspring, is even now receiving the blow which consummates her

* Alluding to a very painful punishment, inflicted on delinquents among the soldiery.

calamities.* In vain she tries to assuage the sorrows of a beloved son; in vain she attempts, with her tender offices, to prolong a life dearer than her own. He faints in her arms; he bows his head; he sinks in death. Fatal, doubly fatal, that last expiring pang! While it dislodges the unwilling soul, it rends an only child from the yearning embraces of a parent, and tears away the support of her age from a disconsolate widow.

While those long for a reprieve, others invite the stroke. Quite weary of the world, with a restless impatience, they sigh for dissolution; some pining away under the tedious decays of an incurable consumption, or gasping for breath, and almost suffocated by an inundation of dropsical waters. On some, a relentless cancer has fastened its envenomed teeth, and is gnawing them, though in the midst of bodily vigour, in the midst of pitying friends, gradually to death. Others are on a rack of agonies, by convulsive fits of the stone. O! how the pain writhes their limbs! how the sweat bedews their flesh, and their eyeballs wildly roll! Methinks the night condoles with these her distressed children; and sheds dewy tears over their sorrowful abodes.—But, of all mortals, they are the most exquisitely miserable, who groan beneath the pressure of a

* This brings to my mind one of the deepest mourning-pieces, extant in the productions of the pen. The sacred historian paints it, in all the simplicity of style, yet in all the strength of colouring. When Jesus came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. What a gradation is here! how pathetically beautiful! every fresh circumstance widens the wound, aggravates the calamity, till the description is worked up into the most finished picture of exquisite and inconsolable distress. He was a young man; cut off in the flower of life, amidst a thousand gay expectations, and smiling hopes. A son; an only son; the afflicted mother's all. So that none remained to preserve the name, or perpetuate the family. What rendered the case still more deplorable, she was a widow: left entirely desolate; abandoned to her woes; without any to share her sorrows, or to comfort her under the irreparable loss. Is not this a fine sketch of the impassioned and picturesque? Who can consider the narrative with any attention, and not feel his heart penetrated with a tender commiseration?—*Luke* vii. 12.

melancholy mind, or smart under the lashes of a resentful conscience. Though robed in ermine, or covered with jewels; the state of a slave chained to the gallies, or of an exile condemned to the mines, is a perfect paradise compared with theirs.

O! that the votaries of mirth, whose life is a continued round of merriment and whim, would bestow one serious reflection on this variety of human woes! It might teach them to be less enamoured with the few languid sweets, that are thinly scattered through this vale of tears, and environed with such a multitude of ragged thorns. It might teach them, no longer to dance away their years, with a giddy rambling impulse, but to aspire, with a determined aim, after those happy regions where delights, abundant and unimbittered, flow.

Can there be circumstances which a man of wisdom would more earnestly deprecate, than these several instances of grievous tribulation? There are; and, what is very astonishing, they are frequently the desire and the choice of those who fancy themselves the sole heirs of happiness. Those, I mean, who are launching out into the depths of extravagance, and running excessive lengths of riot; who are prostituting their reputation, and sacrificing their peace, to the gratification of their lusts; sapping the foundation of their health in debaucheries; or shipwrecking the interests of their families in their bowels. And, what is worse, are forfeiting the joys of an eternal heaven, for the sordid satisfactions of the beast; for the transitory sensations of an hour.—Ye slaves of appetite, how far am I from envying your gross sensualities, and voluptuous revels! Little, ah! little-are you sensible, that while indulgence showers her roses, and luxury diffuses her odours, they scatter poisons also, and shed unheeded bane;* evils incomparably more malignant than the wormwood and gall of the sharpest affliction.—Since

* Yes; in the flowers that wreathe the sparkling bowl,
Fell adders hiss, and pois'nous serpents roll.—*Prior's Sol.*

death is in the drunkard's cup, and worse than poinards in the harlot's embrace, may it ever be the privilege of the man whom I love, to go without his share of these pestilent sweets!*

Abundance of living sparks glitter in the lanes, and twinkle under the hedges. I suppose they are the glow-worms; which have lighted their little lamps, and obtained leave, through the absence of the sun, to play a feeble beam. A faint glimmer just serves to render them perceivable, without tending at all to dissipate the shades, or making any amends for the departed day.—Should some weather-beaten traveller, dropping with wet, and shivering with cold, hover round this mimickry of fire, in order to dry his garments, and warm his benumbed limbs: should some bewildered traveller, groping for his way, in a starless night, and trackless desert, take one of these languid tapers, as a light to his feet and a lantern to his paths; how certainly would both the one and the other be frustrated of their expectation!—And, are they more likely to succeed, who, neglecting that sovereign balm, which distilled from the cross, apply any carnal diversion to heal the anxiety of the mind? who, deaf to the infallible decisions of revelation, resign themselves over to the erroneous conjectures of reason, in order to find the way that leadeth unto life? or, lastly, who have recourse to the froth of this vain world for a satisfactory portion, and a substantial happiness? Their conduct is in no degree wiser; their disappointment equally sure; and their miscarriage infinitely more disastrous. To speak in the delicate language of a sacred writer, "they sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind."†

To speak more plainly, the pleasures of the world,

* Quam suave est suavitatibus istis carere! was St. Augustine's pious exclamation. The substance of which Mr. Pope has expressed with more simplicity, and with no less dignity.

Count all th' advantage prosp'rous vice attains,
'Tis but what virtue flies from, and disdains.

† Hos. viii. 7.

which we are all so prone to dote upon; and the powers of fallen reason, which some are so apt to idolize,* are not only vain, but treacherous; not only a painted flame, like these sparkling animals. but much like those unctuous exhalations, which arise from the marshy ground, and often dance before the eyes of the benighted way-faring man. Kindled into a sort of fire, they personate a guide; and seem to offer their service, but, blazing with delusive light, mislead their followers into hidden pits, headlong precipices, and unfathomable gulfs; where, far from his beloved friends, far from all hopes of succour, the unhappy wanderer is swallowed up and lost.

Not long ago, we observed a very surprising appearance in the western sky. A prodigious star took its flaming route through those coasts; and trailed as it passed, a tremendous length of fire, almost over half the heavens. Some, I imagine, viewed the portentous stranger, with much the same anxious amazement, as Belshazzar beheld the hand-writing upon the wall.—Some looked upon it as a bloody† flag, hung out by divine resentment over a guilty world. Some read in its glaring visage the fate of nations, and the

* I hope it will be observed, that I am far from decrying that noble faculty of reason, when exerted in her proper sphere; when acting in a deferential subordination to the revealed will of heaven. While she exercises her powers within these appointed limits, she is unspeakably serviceable, and cannot be too industriously cultivated. But, when she sets up herself in proud contradistinction to the sacred Oracles; when, all-arrogant and self-sufficient, she says to the word of Scripture, I have no need of thee: she is then, I must be bold to maintain, not only a glow-worm, but an ignis fatuus; not only a bubble, but a snare.

May not this remark, with the strictest propriety, and without the least limitation, be applied to the generality of our modern romances, novels, and theatrical entertainments? These are commonly calculated to inflame a wanton fancy. Or, if conducted with so much modesty as not to debauch the affections, they pervert the judgment, and bewilder the taste. By their incredible adventures, their extravagant parade of gallantry, and their characters widely different from truth and nature, they inspire foolish conceits, beget idle expectations, introduce a disgust of genuine history, and indispose their admirers to acquiesce in the decent civilities, or to relish the sober satisfactions, of common life.

† — Liquida si quando nocte cometæ
Sanguinei lugubre micent.— *Virg.*

fall of kingdoms.* To others it shook, or seemed to shake, pestilence and war from its horrid hair.—For my part, I am not so superstitious as to regard what every astrologer has to prognosticate upon the accession of a comet, or the projection of its huge vapoury train. Nothing can be more precarious and unjustifiable than to draw such conclusions from such events; since they neither are preternatural effects, nor do they throw the frame of things into any disorder. I would rather adore that omnipotent Being, who rolled those stupendous orbs from his creating hand; and leads them, by his providential eye, through unmeasurable tracts of æther: who bids them now approach the sun, and glow with unsufferable ardours;† now retreat to the utmost bounds of our planetary system, and make their entry among other worlds.

They are harmless visitants. I acquit them from the charge of causing, or being accessary to desolating plagues. Would to God there were no other more formidable indications of approaching judgments, or impending ruin! but, alas! when vice becomes predominant, and irreligion almost epidemical; when the sabbaths of a jealous God are notoriously profaned; and that "name which is great, wonderful, and holy," is prostituted to the meanest, or abused to the most execrable purposes; when the worship of our great Creator and Preserver is banished from many of the most conspicuous families, and it is deemed a piece of rude impertinence, so much as to mention the gracious Redeemer in our genteel interviews; when it passes for an elegant freedom of behaviour, to ridicule the mysteries of Christianity; and a species of refined

* ———Crinemque timendi
Sideris, et terris mutantem regna cometem. *Lucan.*

† The comet in the year 1680, according to Sir Isaac Newton's computation, was, in its nearest approach, above 166 times nearer the sun than the earth is. Consequently, its heat was then 28,000 times greater than that of summer. So that a ball of iron as big as the earth, heated by it, would hardly become cool in 50,000 years.—*Der. Astr. Theol. p. 237.*

conversation, to taint the air with lascivious hints;—when those who sit in the scorner's chair sin with a high hand, and many of those who wear the professor's garb, are destitute of the power, and content themselves with the mere form, of godliness;—when such is the state of a community, there is reason, too apparent reason, to be horribly afraid. Such phænomena, abounding in the moral world, are not fanciful, but real omens. Will not an injured God "be avenged on such a nation as this?" Will he not be provoked to "sweep it with the besom of destruction?"*

O! that the inhabitants of Great Britain would lay these alarming considerations to heart! The Lord of Hosts has commanded the sword of civil discord to return into its sheath. But have we returned every one from his evil ways? Are we become a renewed people, devoted to a dying Saviour, and zealous of good works?—What mean those peals of sobs, which burst from the expiring cattle? What mean those melancholy moans, where the lusty droves were wont to low?† What mean those arrows of untimely death discharged on our innocent and useful animals?

No wantonness or sloth has vitiated the blood of these laborious, temperate creatures. They have contracted no disease from unseasonable indulgences, and inordinate revellings. The pure stream is their drink, the simple herb their repast. Neither care disturbs their sleep, nor passion inflames their breast. Whence then are they visited with such terrible disorders as no prudence can prevent, nor any medicines heal?—

* Isa. xiv. 23. The Eternal Sovereign, speaking of Babylon, denounces this threatening:—"I will sweep it with the besom of destruction."—What a noble but dreadful image is here! How strongly and awfully pourtrayed! How pregnant also in its signification! Intimating the vile nature, and expressing the total extirpation, of this wicked people; at the same time, suggesting the perfect ease with which the righteous God would execute his intended vengeance.

† If these papers should be so happy as to outlive their author, perhaps it may be needful to inform posterity, that the above-mentioned hints allude to a most terrible contagious and mortal distemper, raging among the horned cattle, in various parts of the kingdom.

Surely these calamites are the weapons of divine displeasure, and manifest chastisements of an evil generation!*—Surely God, the "God to whom vengeance belongeth," has still a controversy with our sinful land? And who can tell where the visitation shall end? What a storm may follow these prelusive drops! —O! that we may "hear the rod, and who hath appointed it!" Taught by these penal effects of our disobedience, may we remove the accursed thing† from our tents, our practices, our hearts! May we turn from all ungodliness, before wrath come upon us to the uttermost; before iniquity prove our ruin!

Sometimes, at this hour, another most remarkable sight amuses the curious, and alarms the vulgar. A blaze of lambent meteors is kindled, or some very extraordinary lights are refracted, in the quarters of the north. The streams of radiance, like legions rushing to the engagement, meet and mingle, insomuch that the air seems to be all conflicting fire. Within a while they start from one another; and, like legions in precipitate flight, sweep each a separate way through the firmament. Now they are quiescent; anon they are thrown into a quivering motion; presently, the whole horizon is illuminated with the glancing flames. Sometimes, with an aspect awfully ludicrous, they represent extravagant and antic vagaries; at other times, you would suspect that some invisible hand was playing off the dumb artillery of the skies, and, by a strange expedient, giving us the flash without the roar.

The villagers gaze at the spectacle; first with wonder, then with horror. A general panic seizes the country. Every heart throbs, and every face is pale. The crowds that flock together, instead of diminishing, increase the dread. They catch contagion from

* Hinc lætis vituli vulgo moriuntur in herbis,
Et dulces animas plena ad præsepia reddunt.
Balatu hinc pecorum, et crebris mugitibus amnes,
Arentesque sonant ripæ, collesque supini.—*Virg.*

† Josh. vi. 18.

each other's looks and words: while fear is in every eye, and every tongue speaks the language of terror. Some see hideous shapes, armies mixing in fierce encounter, or fields swimming with blood. Some foresee direful events, states overthrown, or mighty monarchs tottering on their thrones. Others, scared with still more frightful apprehensions, think of nothing but the day of doom. "Sure," says one, "the unalterable hour is struck, and the end of all things come." —"See," replies another, "how the blasted stars look wan! Are not these the signs of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven?"—"Jesus prepare us" (cries a third, and lifts up his eyes in devotion) for the archangel's trump, and the great tribunal!"

If this waving brightness, which plays innocently over our heads, be so amazing to multitudes, what inexpressible consternation must overwhelm unthinking mortals, when the general conflagration commences! The day, the dreadful day, is approaching, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise,* and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. That mighty hand, which once opened the windows from on high, and broke up the fountains of the great deep, will then unlock all the magazines

* 2 Pet. iii. 10. I have often thought this verse an eminent instance of that kind of beautiful writing, in which the very sound bears a sort of significancy; at least carries an exact correspondence with the sense. The original expression is one of the hoarest and deepest words in language. Nothing could be more exquisitely adapted to affect the ear, as well as impress the imagination, with the wreck of nature, and the crash of a falling world.—I scarce ever read this clause, but it brings to my mind that admired description of Milton:

> —— On a sudden open fly,
> With impetuous recoil, and jarring sound,
> Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
> Harsh thunder. Book ii. l. 879.

It is a pleasing employ, and a very laudable office of true criticism, to point out these inferior recommendations of the sacred classics. Though, I believe, the inspired writers themselves, amidst all the elevation and magnificence of their divine ideas, disdained a scrupulous attention to such little niceties of style.

of fire, and pour a second deluge upon the earth. The vengeful flames, kindled by the breath of the Almighty, spread themselves from the centre to the circumference. Nothing can withstand their impetuosity, nothing can escape their rage. Universal desolation attends their progress. Magnificent palaces, and solemn temples, are laid in ashes. Spacious cities, and impregnable towers, are mingled in one smoking mass. Not only the productions of human art, but the works of almighty power, are fuel for the devouring element. The everlasting mountains melt, like the snows which cover their summit. Even vast oceans serve only to augment the inconceivable rapidity and fury of the blaze.—O! how shall I, or others stand undismayed amidst the glare of a burning world, unless the Lord Jehovah be our defence? How shall we be upheld in security, when the globe itself is sinking in a fiery ruin, unless the Rock of ages be our support?

Behold! a new spectacle of wonder! The moon is making her entry on the eastern sky. See her rising in clouded majesty! opening, as it were, and asserting her original commission to rule over the night: all grand and stately, but somewhat sullied in her aspect. However, she brightens as she advances; and grows clearer as she climbs higher: till, at length, her silver loses all its dross; she unveils her peerless light; and becomes "the beauty of heaven, the glory of the stars;"* delighting every eye, and cheering the whole world, with the brightness of her appearance, and the softness of her splendours.—O! thou queen of the shades! may it be my ambition to follow this thy instructive example! While others are fond to transcribe the fashions of little courts, and to mimic personages of inferior state! be it mine to imitate thy improving purity! May my conduct become more unblemished, and my temper more refined, as I proceed farther and farther, in my probationary course!

* Eccles. xliii. 9.
Lucidum cœli decus.—*Hor.*

May every sordid desire wear away, and every irregular appetite be gradually lost, as I make nearer approaches to the celestial mansions! Will not this be a comfortable evidence, that I too shall shine in my adored Redeemer's kingdom? shine with a richer lustre, than that which radiates from thy resplendent orb; shine, with an unfading lustre, when every ray that beams from thy beauteous sphere, is totally extinguished.

The day afforded us a variety of entertaining sights. These were all withdrawn, at the accession of darkness. The stars, kindly officious, immediately lent us their aid. This served to alleviate the frown of night, rather than to recover the objects from their obscurity. A faint ray scarcely reflected, and not from the entire surface of things, gave the straining eye a very imperfect glimpse; such as rather mocked, than satisfied vision.—Now the moon is risen, and has collected all her beams, the veil is taken off from the countenance of nature. I see the recumbent flocks; I see the green hedge-rows, though without the feathered choristers, hopping from spray to spray. In short, I see once again the world's great picture; not indeed in its late lively colours, but more delicately shaded, and arrayed in softer charms.*

What a majestic scene is here! incomparably grand, and exquisitely fine!—The moon, like an immense crystal lamp, pendent in the magnificent ceiling of the heavens;—the stars, like so many thousands of golden tapers, fixed in their azure sockets;—all pouring their lustre on spacious cities, and lofty mountains; glittering on the ocean; gleaming on the forest; and opening a prospect, wide as the eye can glance, more various than fancy can paint.† We are forward

* ——— Now reigns,
Full orb'd, the moon; and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things. *Milt.*

† As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er heav'n's clear azure spreads her sacred light;
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;

to admire the performances of human art. A landscape, elegantly designed, and executed with a masterly hand; a piece of statuary which seems, amidst all the recommendations of exact proportion and a graceful attitude, to soften into flesh, and almost breathe with life; these little imitations of nature, we behold with a pleasing surprise; and shall we be less affected, less delighted, with the inexpressibly noble, and completely finished original?—The ample dimensions of Ranelagh's dome, the gay illuminations of Vauxhall grove, I should scorn to mention on such an occasion, were they not the objects of general admiration. Shall we be charmed with those puny essays of finite ingenuity; and touched with no transport at this stupendous display of omnipotent skill? at the august grandeur, and shining stateliness of the firmament? which forms an alcove for ten thousand worlds, and is ornamented with myriads of everlasting luminaries.—Surely, this must betray, not only a total want of religion, but the most abject littleness of mind, and the utmost poverty of genius.

The moon is not barely "an ornament in the high places of the Lord;" * but of signal service to the inhabitants of the earth.—How uncomfortable is deep, pitchy, total darkness! especially in the long absence of the winter's sun. Welcome therefore, thrice welcome, this auspicious gift of Providence, to enliven the nocturnal gloom, and line with silver the raven-coloured

> Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
> And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole;
> O'er the dark trees a yellow verdure shed,
> And tip with silver every mountain's head:
> Then shine the vales; the rocks in prospect rise;
> A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
> The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
> Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light. *Iliad.* viii.

† transcribe these lines, because Mr. Pope says, they exhibit, in the original, the finest night-piece in poetry. And, if they are so beautiful in Homer's language, who can suspect their suffering any disadvantage from the pen of his admirable translator?

* Eccles. xliii. 9.

mantle of night.—How desirable to have our summer evenings illuminated! that we may be able to tread the dewy meads, and breathe the delicious fragrance of our gardens; especially, when the sultry heats render it irksome and fatiguing to walk abroad by day.—How cheering to the shepherd, the use of this universal lantern as he tends his fleecy charge, or late consigns them to their hurdled cots? How comfortable and how advantageous to the mariner, as he ploughs the midnight main, to adjust the tackling, to explore his way, and, under the influence of this beaming sconce, to avoid the fatal rock!—For these, and other beneficial purposes, the hand of the Almighty has hung the stately branch on high; and filled it with a splendour not confined to a single edifice, or commensurate to a particular square, but diffusive as the whole extent of the hemisphere.

The most faithful of our inferior servants are sometimes tardy in their office, sometimes negligent of their duty. But this celestial attendant is most exactly punctual, at all the stated periods of her ministration. If we choose to prolong our journey, after the sun is gone down, the moon, during her whole increase, is always ready to act in the capacity of a guide. If we are inclined to set out very early in the morning, the moon, in her decrease, prevents the dawn, on purpose to offer her assistance. And, because it is so pleasant a thing for the eyes to behold the light, the moon, at her full, by a course of unintermitted waiting, gives us, as it were, a double day.—How apparently has the Divine Wisdom interested itself, in providing even for the pleasurable accommodation of man! How desirous that he should want no piece of commodious furniture, no kind of delightful convenience! and, in prosecution of these benevolent intentions, has annexed so valuable an appendage to the terrestrial globe.—Justly, therefore, does the psalmist celebrate that admirable constitution, which ordained the moon and

the stars to govern the night, as an instance of rich goodness, and of mercy which endureth for ever.*

The moon, it is confessed, is no luminous body. All the brightness which beautifies her countenance, is originally in the sun, and no more than transmissively in her. That glorious orb is the parent of day, and the palace of light. From thence the morning star gilds her† horn; from thence the planetary circles are crowned with lustre; and from thence the moon derives all her silver radiance.—It is pleasing to reflect, that such is the case with the all-sufficient Redeemer and his dependent people. We are replenished from his fulness. What do we possess which we have not received, and what can we desire which we may not expect, from that never-failing source of all good? He is the author of our faith, and the former of our graces. In his unspotted life, we see the path; in his meritorious death, the price; and in his triumphant resurrection, the proof of bliss and immortality. If we offend and fall seven times a day, He is the Lord our peace.‡ If we are depraved, and our best deeds very unworthy, He is the Lord our righteousness.§ If we are blind, and even brutish in heavenly knowledge, He is the Lord our wisdom,‖ his word dispels the shades; his spirit scatters the intellectual gloom; his eye looks our darkness into day. In short, we are nothing, and Christ is all. Worse than defective in ourselves, "we are complete in Him." So that if we shine, it is with delegated rays, and with borrowed light. We act by a strength, and glory in merits not our own—Oh! may we be

* Psal. cxxxvi. 9.

† I might, to justify this expression, observe that the planet Venus, commonly called the morning star, is found, by our telescopes, frequently to appear horned; or to have a crescent of light, somewhat like the moon, a little before or after her conjunction. But this would be a remark too deep and refined for my scheme; which proceeds only upon a superficial knowledge, and the most obvious appearances of nature.

‡ Judges vi. 24. § Jer. xxiii. 6. ‖ 1 Cor. i. 30.

thoroughly sensible of our dependence on the Saviour! may we constantly imbibe his propitious beams; and never, by indulging unbelief, or backsliding into folly, withdraw our souls from his benign influences! lest we lose our comfort and our holiness, as the fair ruler of the night loses her splendour, when her urn is turned from its fountain,* and receives no more communications of solar effulgence.

The moon is incessantly varying, either in her aspect or her stages.—Sometimes she looks full upon us, and her visage is all lustre. Sometimes she appears in profile, and shows us only half her enlightened face. Anon, a radiant crescent but just adorns her brow. Soon it dwindles into a slender streak: till, at length, all her beauty vanishes, and she becomes a beamless orb.—Sometimes she rises with the descending day, and begins her procession amidst admiring multitudes. Ere long, she defers her progress till the midnight watches, and steals unobserved upon the sleeping world.—Sometimes she just enters the edges of the western horizon, and drops us a ceremonious visit. Within a while, she sets out on her nightly tour from the opposite regions of the east; traverses the whole hemisphere, and never offers to withdraw, till the more refulgent partner of her sway renders her presence unnecessary.—In a word, she is, while conversant among us, still waxing or waning, and "never continueth in one stay."

Such is the moon, and such are all sublunary things, exposed to perpetual vicissitudes.—How often and how soon, have the faint echoes of renown slept in silence, or been converted into the clamours of obloquy! The same lips, almost with the same breath, cry, Hosanna and Crucify!—Have not riches confessed their notorious treachery, a thousand and a thousand times?

* Alluding to those truly poetical lines in Milton,

Hither, as to their fountain, other stars
Repairing, in their golden urns draw light.
Par. Lost. B. iii. l. 361.

Either melting away like snow in our hands, by insensible degrees, or escaping, like a winged prisoner from its cage, with a precipitate flight.—Have we not known the bridegroom's closet an antichamber to the tomb; and heard the voice which so lately pronounced the sparkling pair husband and wife, proclaim an everlasting divorce? and seal the decree, with that solemn asseveration, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust!"—Our friends, though the medicine of life; our health, though the balm of nature; are a most precarious possession. How soon may the first become a corpse in our arms; and how easily is the last destroyed in its vigour!—You have seen, no doubt, a set of pretty painted birds perching on your trees, or sporting in your meadows. You was pleased with the lovely visitants, that brought beauty on their wings, and melody in their throats. But could you insure the continuance of this agreeable entertainment? No, truly. At the least disturbing noise, at the least terrifying appearance, they start from their seats; they mount the skies; and are gone in an instant, are gone for ever. Would you choose to have a happiness which bears date with their arrival, and expires at their departure? If you could not be content with a portion, enjoyable only through such a fortuitous term, not of years, but of moments, O! take up with nothing earthly; set your affections on things above; there alone is "no variableness or shadow of turning."

Job is not a more illustrious pattern of patience, than an eminent exemplification of this remark.—View him in his private estate. He heaps up silver as the dust; he washes his steps in butter; and the rock pours him out rivers of oil.—View him in his public character. Princes revere his dignity: the aged listen to his wisdom; every eye beholds him with delight; every tongue loads him with blessings.—View him in his domestic circumstances. On one hand, he is defended by a troop of sons; on the other adorned with a train of daughters; and, on all sides surrounded by

"a very great household."—Never was human felicity so consummate; never was disastrous revolution so sudden.—The lightning, which consumed his cattle, was not more terrible, and scarce more instantaneous. The joyful parent is bereft of his offspring, and his "children are buried in death." The man of affluence is stript of his abundance; and he, who was clothed in scarlet, embraces the dunghill. The venerable patriarch is the derision of scoundrels; and the late darling of an indulgent providence is become, "a brother to dragons, a companion of owls." Nor need we go back to former ages, for proofs of this afflicting truth. In our times, in all times, the wheel continues the same incessant whirl. And frequently those who are triumphing to-day, in the highest elevation of joy, tomorrow are bemoaning the instability of mortal affairs, in the very depths of misery.*—Amidst so much fluctuation and uncertainty, how wretched is the condition, which has no anchor of the soul sure and steadfast? May thy loving kindness, O God, be our present treasure; and thy future glory our reversionary inheritance! Then shall our happiness not be like the full-orbed moon, which is "a light that decreaseth in its perfection;" but like the sun, when he goeth forth in his strength, and knoweth no other change, but that of shining more and more unto the perfect day.

* I believe, I may venture to apply, what the Temanite says of the affairs of the wicked, to all sublunary things, as a true description of their very great instability. Job xxii. 16, נהר יוצק יסודם rendered by Schultens, "Flumem fusum fundamentum eorum." Their foundation (or what they reckon their most solid and stable possession) is a flood poured out.—Which is one of the boldest images, and most poetical beauties, I ever met with in any language, sacred or profane. In order to have a tolerable conception of the image, and a taste of its beauty, you must suppose a torrent of waters rushing in broken cataracts, and with impetuous rapidity, from a steep and craggy mountain. Then imagine to yourself an edifice built upon the surge of this rolling precipice; which has no other basis than one of those headlong whirling waves. Was there ever such a representation of transitory prosperity, tending, with inconceivable swiftness, unto ruin? Yet such is every form of human felicity, that is not grounded on Jesus, and a participation of his merits, who is the rock of ages; on Jesus, and his image formed in our hearts, which is the hope of glory.

Methinks, in this ever-varying sphere, I see a representation not only of our temporal advantages, but also of our spiritual accomplishments. Such, I am sure, is what the kind partiality of a friend would call my righteousness; and such, I am apt to suspect,* is the righteousness of every man living. Now we exercise it, in some few instances, in some little degrees. Anon, sin revives, and leads our souls into a transient, though unwilling captivity. Now we are meek; but soon a ruffling accident intervenes, and turns our composure into a fretful disquietude. Now we are humble; soon we reflect upon some inconsiderable or imaginary superiority over others, and a sudden elatement swells our minds. Now, perhaps, we possess a clean heart, and are warm with holy love. But, Oh! how easily is the purity of our affections sullied; how soon the fervour of our gratitude cooled! And is there not something amiss even in our best moments? Something to be ashamed of in all we are, something to be repented of in all we do? . . .

With what gladness, therefore, and adoring thankfulness, should we submit to the righteousness of "our incarnate God;" and receive, as a divine gift, what cannot be acquired by human works!†—A

* I would not be understood as measuring, in this respect, others by myself; but as taking my estimate from the unerring standard of scripture. And indeed, proceeding on this evidence, supported by this authority, I might have ventured farther than a bare suspicion. For "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," says the spirit of inspiration by Solomon. (Eccles. vii. 20.) Nay, such is the purity, and so extensive are the demands of the divine law, that an apostle makes a still more humbling acknowledgment; "In many things we offend all." (Jam. iii. 2.)—And the unerring teacher, who most thoroughly knew our frame, directs the most advanced, most establisLed, and most watchful Christians, to pray daily for the forgiveness of their daily trespasses.—To which testimonies, I beg leave to add an elegant passage from the Canticles; because it not only expresses the sentiment of this paragraph, but illustrates it by the very same similitude. She (the church) as fair as the moon; clear as the sun. Fair as the moon, the lesser and changeable light, in her sanctification; clear as the sun, the greater and invariable luminary, in her justification. The inherent holiness of believers being imperfect, and subject to many inequalities; while their imputed righteousness is every way complete, and constantly like itself.—Cant. vi. 10.

† Rom. v. 17.—x. 3.

writer of the first distinction, and nicest discernment, styles the obedience of our glorious Surety an everlasting righteousness;* such as was subject to no interruption, nor obscured by the least blemish; but proceeded always in the same uniform tenor, of the most spotless perfection. This righteousness, in another sense, answers the prophet's exalted description, as its beneficial and sovereign efficacy knows no end, but lasts through all our life; lasts in the trying hour of death; lasts at the decisive day of judgment; lasts through every generation; and will last to all eternity.

Sometimes I have seen that resplendent globe stript of her radiance; or, according to the emphatical language of scripture, "turned into blood." The earth, interposing with its opaque body, intercepted the solar rays, and cast its own gloomy shadow on the moon. The malignant influence gained upon her sickening orb; extinguished more and more the feeble remainders of light; till at length, like one in a deep swoon, no comeliness was left in her countenance; she was totally overspread with darkness.—At this juncture, what a multitude of eyes were gazing upon the rueful spectacle! even of those eyes which disregarded the empress of the night, or beheld her with indifference, when, robed in glory, and riding in her triumphal chariot, she shed a softer day through the nations. But now, under these circumstances of disgrace, they watch her motions with the most prying attention. In every place her misfortune is the object of general observation; and the prevailing topic of discourse in every company.

Is it not thus with regard to persons of eminence in their respective spheres! Kings, at the head of their subjects; nobles, surrounded with their dependents; and (after names of so much grandeur, may I be allowed to add?) ministers labouring among their people,†

* Dan. ix. 24.

† "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." *Matt.* v. 14.

are each in a conspicuous station. Their conduct in its minutest step, especially in any miscarriage, will be narrowly surveyed, and critically scanned. Can there be a louder call, to ponder the paths of their feet, and to be particularly jealous over all their ways?—Those, who move in inferior life, may grossly offend, and little alarm be given; perhaps no notice taken: but it is not be expected that the least slip in their carriage, the least flaw in their character, will pass undiscovered. Malice, with her eagle eyes, will be sure to discern them; while censure, with her shrill trumpet, will be as far from concealing them, as calumny, with her treacherous whispers, from extenuating them. A planet may sink below the horizon; or a star, for several months, withdraw its shining; and scarce one in ten thousand perceive the loss. But if the moon suffers a transient eclipse, almost half the world are spectators of her dishonour.

Very different was the case when, at this late hour, I have taken a solitary walk on the western cliffs. At the foot of the steep mountain, the sea, all clear and smooth, spread itself into an immense plain, and held a watery mirror to the skies. Infinite heights above the firmament stretched its azure expanse, bespangled with unnumbered stars, and adorned with the moon, "walking in brightness."* She seemed to contemplate herself with a peculiar pleasure, while the transparent surface both received and returned her silver image. Here, instead of being covered with sackcloth, she shone with double lustre; or rather, with a lustre multiplied, in proportion to the number of beholders and their various situations.

Such, methinks, is the effect of an exemplary behaviour in persons of exalted rank. Their course, as it is nobly distinguished, so it will be happily influential. Others will catch the diffusive ray, and be ambitious to resemble a pattern so attracting, so commanding. Their amiable qualities will not terminate in them-

* Job xxxi. 26.

selves, but we shall see them reflected from their families, their acquaintance, their retainers. Just as we may now behold another moon, trembling* in the stream, glittering in the canal, and displaying its lovely impress on every collection of waters.

The moon, philosophy says, is a sort of sovereign over the great deep. Her orb, like a royal sceptre, sways the ocean, and actuates the fluid realms. It swells the tides, and perpetuates the reciprocal returns of ebb and flow; by which means, the liquid element purges off its filth, and is preserved from being putrified itself, and from poisoning the world. Is the moon thus operative from the vast abyss? And, shall not the faith of eternal and infinite delights to come, be equally efficacious on this soul of mine? Far above her argent fields are treasures of happiness, unseen by mortal eye, by mortal ear unheard, and unconceived by any human imagination. In that desirable world, the most distinguished and exalted honours also are conferred; in comparison with which, the thrones and diadems of earthly monarchs are empty pageants, and childish toys. Yonder arch of sapphire, with all its spangles of gold, is but the floor of those divine abodes. What then are the apartments? what is the palace? How bright with glories; how rich with bliss!

O, ye mansions of blessedness! ye beauties of my Father's kingdom! which far outshine these lamps of the visible heaven, transmit your sweet and winning invitations to my heart. Attract and refine all my affections; withdraw them from stagnating on the sordid shores of flesh; never suffer them to settle upon the impure lees of sense; but impress them with emotions of restless desires after sublime and celestial joys. Joys that will proceed, still proceed, in a copious and everlasting flow, when seas shall cease to roll. Joys, that will charm every faculty with unimaginable pleasure, when the moon, with her waxing splendours, shall cheer our sight no more.

* Splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.—*Virg.*

Enough for the present evening. My thoughts have been sufficiently exercised, and my steps begin to be attended with weariness. Let me obey the admonition of nature, and give respite to my meditations, slumber to my eyes. But stay; shall I retire to the bed of sleep with as little ceremony, and with as much inattion, as the brutes to their sordid layer! Are no acknowledgments due to that divine Being, who is the support of my life, and the length of my days? Have I no farther need of his protecting care; no more occasion for the blessings of his goodness? Lepidus, perhaps, may laugh at the bended knee; and have a thousand darts of raillery ready to discharge on the practice of devotion. The wits, I know, are unmercifully severe on what they call the drudgery of prayer, and the fantastical rant of praise. These they leave to the illiterate labourer, and the mean mechanic; or treat them, with a contemptible sneer, as the parson's ignoble trade.

Is it then an instance of superstitious blindness to distinguish, or of whimsical zeal to celebrate, the most supereminent excellency and merit? Is it an ungraceful business, or does it argue a grovelling disposition, to magnify goodness transcendently rich and diffusive? —What can be so truly becoming a dependent state, as to pay our adoring homage to the author of all perfection; and profess our devoted allegiance to the supreme almighty Governor of the universe? Can any thing more significantly bespeak an ingenuous temper, or administer a more real satisfaction to its finest feelings, than the exercises of penitential devotion? by which we give vent to an honest anguish, or melt into filial sorrow, for our insensibility to the best of friends —for our disobedience to the best of parents? In a word, can there be a more sublime pleasure, than to dwell, in fixed contemplation, on the beauties of the eternal mind; the amiable original of all that is fair, grand, and harmonious; the beneficent giver of all that is convenient, comfortable, and useful? Can there

be a more advantageous employ, than to present our requests to the Father of Mercies; opening our minds to the irradiations of his wisdom, and all the faculties of our souls to the communications of his grace? It is strange, unaccountably strange, that the notion of dignity in sentiment, and the pursuit of refined enjoyment, should ever be disunited from devotion: that persons, who make pretensions to an improved taste and exalted genius, should neglect this most ennobling intercourse with the wisest and best of beings; the inexhaustible source of honour and joy.

Shall I be deterred from approaching this source of the purest delight? deterred from pursuing this highest improvement of my nature? deterred from all by a formidable banter, or confuted by one irrefragable smile? No: let the moon, in her resplendent sphere, and yondes pole, with all its starry train, witness if I be silent even or morn; if I refrain to kindle in my heart, and breathe from my lips, the reasonable incense of praise; praise to that great and glorious God, who formed the earth, and built the skies; who poured from his hand the watery world, and shed the all-surrounding air abroad. "Thou also madest the night, maker Omnipotent! and thou, the day; which I, though less than the least of all thy mercies, have passed in safety, tranquillity, and comfort. When I was lost in the extravagance of dreams, or lay immersed in the insensibility of sleep, thy hand recovered me from the temporary lethargy. Thy hand set a new, a delicately fine edge, on all my blunted senses; and strung my sinews with recruited vigour. When my thoughts were benumbed and stupified, thy quickening influence roused them into activity; when they were disconcerted and wild, thy regulating influence reduced them into order: refitting me, at once, to relish the innocent entertainments of an animal, and to enjoy the sublime gratifications of a rational capacity. When darkness covered the creation, at thy command the sun arose; painted the flowers, and distinguished every

object; gave light to my feet, and gave nature, with all her beautiful scenes, to my eye. To thee, O thou God of my strength, I owe the continuance of my being, and the vivacity of my constitution. By thy sacred order, without any consciousness of mine, the wheels of life move, and the crimson fountain plays. Overruled by thy exquisite skill, it transforms itself, by the nicest operations of an inexplicable kind of chemistry, into a variety of the finest secretions; which glide into the muscles, or swell them for action; or pour themselves into the fluids, and repair their incessant decays; which cause cheerfulness to sparkle in the eye, and health to bloom in the cheek.

"Disastrous accidents, injurious to the peace of my mind, or fatal to the welfare of my body, beset my paths. But thy faithfulness and truth, like an impenetrable shield, guarded me all around. Under this divine protection, I walked secure, amidst legions of apparent perils; and passed unhurt through a far greater multiplicity of unseen evils. Not one of my bones was broken; not a single shaft grazed upon my ease: even when the eye that watched over me saw, in its wide survey, thousands falling beside me in irrecoverable ruin, and ten thousands deeply wounded on my right hand. If sickness has at any time saddened my chamber, or pain harrowed my flesh, it was a wholesome discipline, and a gracious severity. The chastisement proved a sovereign medicine, to cure me of an immoderate fondness for this imperfect, troublesome state, and to quicken my desires after the unimbittered enjoyments of my eternal home. Has not thy munificence, unwearied and unbounded, spread my table, and furnished it with the finest wheat—replenished it with marrow and fatness? While temperance sweetened the bowl, appetite seasoned the dish; contentment and gratitude crowned the repast. Has not thy kindness, O God of the families of Israel, preserved my affectionate relations; who study, by their tender offices, to soften every care, and heighten every joy? Has not

thy kindness given me valuable friends, whose presence is a cordial, to cheer me in a dejected hour; and whose conversation mingles improvement with delight?

"When sin lay disguised, amidst flowery scenes of pleasure, enlightened by thy wisdom, I discerned the latent mischief; made resolute by grace, I shunned the luscious bane. If, through the impulse of sensuality, or the violence of passion, I have been hurried into the snare, and stung by the serpent; thy faithful admonitions have recalled the foolish wanderer; while the blood of thy Son has healed his deadly wounds. Some, no doubt, have been cut off in the midst of their iniquities; and transmitted, from the thrillings of polluted joy, to the agonies of eternal despair; whereas, I have been distinguished by long-suffering mercy; and, instead of lifting up my eyes in torments, to behold a heaven irrecoverably lost, I may lift them up under the pleasing views of being admitted, ere long, into those abodes of endless felicity. In the mean time, thou hast vouchsafed me the revelation of thy will, the influences of thy spirit, and abundance of the most effectual aids, for advancing in knowledge, and growing in godliness; for becoming more conformable to thy image, and more meet for thy presence; for tasting the pleasures of religion, and securing the riches of eternity.

"How various is thy beneficence, O thou lover of souls! It has unsealed a thousand sources of good; opened a thousand avenues of delight; and heaped blessings upon me with a ceaseless liberality. If I should attempt to declare them, they would be more than the starry host which glitter in this unclouded sky; more than the dewy gems, which will adorn the face of the morning.

"And shall I forget the God of my salvation, the author of all my mercies? Rather let my pulse forget to beat! Shall I render him no expressions of thankfulness? Then might all nature reproach my ingratitude. Shall I rest satisfied with the bare acknowledgment of my lips? No; let my life be vocal, and speak

his praise, in that only genuine, that most emphatical language—the language of devout obedience. Let the bill be drawn upon my very heart; let all my affections acknowledge the draught; and let the whole tenor of my actions, in time and through eternity, be continually paying the debt—the ever-pleasing, ever-growing debt of duty, veneration, and love.

"And can I, O thou guide of my goings, and guardian of all my interests—can I distrust such signal, such experienced goodness? Thou hast been my helper through all the busy scenes of day; therefore, under the shadow of thy wings will I repose myself, during the darkness, the danger, and death-like inactivity of the night. Whatever defilement I have contracted, wash it thoroughly away in redeeming blood; and let neither the sinful stain, nor the sinful inclination, accompany me to my couch. Then shall I lay me down in peace, and take my rest; cheerfully referring it to thy all-wise determination, whether I shall open my eyes in this world, or awake in the unknown regions of another."

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

STARRY HEAVENS.

There dwells a noble pathos in the skies,
Which warms our passions, proselytes our hearts.
How eloquently shines the glowing pole!
With what authority it gives its charge,
Remonstrating great truths in style sublime!

Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

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N. B. It may seem unaccountable to an unlearned reader, that astronomers should speak such amazing things; and speak them with such an air of assurance, concerning the distances and magnitudes, the motions and relations, of the heavenly bodies. I would desire such a person to consider the case of eclipses, and with what exactness they are calculated. They are not only foretold, but the very instant of their beginning is determined. The precise time of their continuance is assigned; assigned, almost to the nicety of a moment; and, what is still more surprising, for the space of hundreds or thousands of years to come.—As this is a matter of fact, absolutely indisputable, it is also a very obvious, yet solid demonstration, that the principles of science, on which these calculations proceed, are not mere conjecture, or precarious supposition; but have a real, a certain foundation, in the nature and constitution of things.

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

STARRY HEAVENS.

THIS evening, I exchange the nice retreats of art for the noble theatre of nature. Instead of measuring my steps under the covert of an arbour, let me range along the summit of this gently rising hill. There is no need of the leafy shade, since the sun has quitted the horizon, and withdrawn his scorching beams. But see, how advantages and inconveniencies are usually linked, and checker our affairs below! If the annoying heat ceases, the landscape and its pleasing scenes are also removed.—The majestic castle and the lowly cottage are vanished together. I have lost the aspiring mountain and its russet brow; I look round, but to no purpose, for the humble vale and its flowery lap. The plains, whitened with flocks, and the heath, yellow with furze, disappear. The advancing night has wrapt in darkness the long-extended forest, and drawn her mantle over the windings of the silver stream. I no longer behold that luxuriant fertility in the fields; that wild magnificence of prospect, and endless variety of images, which have so often touched me with delight, and struck me with awe, from this commanding eminence.

The loss, however, is scarcely to be regretted; since it is amply compensated by the opening beauties of

the sky. Here I enjoy a free view of the whole hemisphere, without any obstacle from below to confine the exploring eye, or any cloud from above to overcast the spacious concave. It is true the lively vermilion, which so lately streaked the chambers of the west, is all faded; but the planets, one after another, light up their lamps; the stars advance in their glittering train; a thousand, and a thousand luminaries shine forth in successive splendours; and the whole firmament is kindled into the most beautiful glow. The blueness of the æther, heightened by the season of the year, and still more enlivened by the absence of the moon, gives those gems of heaven the strongest lustre.

One pleasure more, the invading gloom has not been able to snatch from my sense. The night rather improves, than destroys, the fragrance which exhales from the blooming beans. With these the sides of this sloping declivity are lined; and with these the balmy zephyrs perfume their wings. Does Arabia, from all her spicy groves, breathe a more liberal, or a more charming gale of sweets? And, what is a peculiar recommendation of the rural entertainments presented in our happy land, they are alloyed by no apprehensions of danger. No poisonous serpent lurks under the blossom, nor any ravenous beast lies ready to start from the thicket. —But I wander from a far more exalted subject. My thoughts, like my affections, are too easily diverted from the heavens, and detained by inferior objects.— Away, my attention, from these little blandishments of the earth, since all the glories of the sky invite thy regard.

We have taken a turn among the tombs, and viewed the solemn memorials of the dead, in order to learn the vanity of mortal things, and to break their soft enchantment. We have surveyed the ornaments of the garden; not that the heart might be planted in the parterre, or take root among the flowery race; but that these delicacies of a day might teach us to aspire after a better paradise, where beauty never fades, and delight

is ever in the bloom.—A third time we lighted the candle of meditation; and sought for wisdom, not in the crowded city, or wrangling schools, but in the silent and lonely walks of ancient night.*—Let us once more indulge the contemplative vein, and raise our speculations to those sublimer works of the great Creator, which the regions of the sky contain, and this dusky hour unveils.†

If we have discerned the touches of his pencil, glowing in the colours of spring; if we have seen a sample of his beneficence, exhibited in the stores of nature, and a ray of his brightness beaming in the blaze of day; what an infinitely richer field, for the display of his perfections, are the heavens! The heavens, in the most emphatical manner, declare the glory of God. The heavens are nobly eloquent of the Deity, and the most magnificent heralds of their Maker's praise. They speak to the whole universe; for there is neither speech so barbarous, but their language is understood; nor nation so distant, but their voices are heard among them.‡—Let me then, in this solemn season, formed for thought and a calm intercourse with heaven, let me listen to their silent lectures. Perhaps I may receive such impressive manifestations of "the eternal power and Godhead," as may shed religion on my soul, while I walk the solitary shades; and may be a tutelary friend to my virtue, when the call of business, and the return of light expose me again to the inroads of temptation.

The Israelites, instigated by frenzy rather than devotion, worshipped the host of heaven. And the pretenders to judicial astrology talk of, I know not what, mysterious efficacy in the different aspect of the stars, or the various conjunction and opposition of the planets.—Let those who are unacquainted with the sure

* Referring to the several subjects of the three preceding essays.

† Night opes the noblest scenes, and sheds an awe
Which gives those venerable scenes full weight,
And deep reception in the entender'd heart.
Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

‡ Psal. xix. 3.

word of Revelation, give ear to these sons of delusion, and dealers in deceit. For my part, it is a question of indifference to me, whether the constellations shone with smiles, or lowered in frowns, on the hour of my nativity. Let Christ be my guard; and, secure in such a protection, I would laugh at their impotent menaces. Let Christ be my guide; and I shall scorn to ask, as well as despair of receiving, any predictory information from such senseless masses. What! shall "the living seek to the dead?"* Can these bodies advertise me of future events, which are unconscious of their own existence? Shall I have recourse to dull unintelligent matter, when I may apply to that all-wise Being, who, with one comprehensive glance, distinctly views whatever is lodged in the bosom of immensity, or forming in the womb of futurity?—Never, never will I search for any intimations of my fate; but often trace my Creator's footsteps,† in yonder starry plains. In the former case, they would be teachers of lies; in the latter, they are oracles of truth. In this therefore, this sense only, I profess myself the pupil of the stars.

The vulgar are apprehensive of nothing more than a multitude of bright spangles dropt over the æthereal blue. They have no higher notion of these fine appearances, than that they are so many golden studs,

* Isa. viii. 19.

† It is most becoming (says a great author) such imperfect creatures as we are, to contemplate the works of God with this design, that we may discern the manifestations of wisdom in them; and thereby excite in ourselves those devout affections, and that superlative respect, which is the very essence of praise, as it is a reasonable and moral service." *Abernethy on the Attributes.*—And, indeed, if we are sincerely disposed to employ ourselves in this excellent, this delightful duty, of praising the infinite Creator, the means and the motives are both at hand. His works, in a wonderful and instructive variety, present themselves with pregnant manifestations of the most transcendent excellencies of their Maker. They pour their evidence from all quarters, and into all the avenues of the mind. They invite us, especially in the magnificent system of the universe, to contemplate counsel, consummately wise, and execution inimitably perfect:—power, to which nothing is impossible; and goodness which extendeth to all, which endureth for ever.—To give, not a full display, but only some slight strictures of those glorious truths, is the principal scope of the following remarks.

with which the empyrean arch is decorated.—But studious minds, that carry a more accurate and strict inquiry among the celestial bodies, bring back advices of a most astonishing import. Let me just recollect the most material of those stupendous discoveries, in order to furnish out proper subjects for contemplation. And let the unlearned remember, that the scene I am going to display, is the workmanship of that incomprehensible God, who is "perfect in knowledge, and mighty in power," Whose name, whose nature, and all whose operations, are "great and marvellous;" who summons into being, with equal ease, a single grain, or ten thousand worlds.—To this if we continually advert, the assertions, though they will certainly excite our admiration, need not transcend our belief.

The earth is, in fact, a round body; however it may seem, in some parts, to be sunk into vales, and raised into hills;* in other parts, to be spread into a spacious plain, extending to the confines of the heavens, or terminated by the waters of the ocean.—We may fancy that it has deep foundations, and rests upon some prodigiously solid basis. But it is pendent, in the wide transpicuous æther, without any visible cause to uphold it from above, or support it from beneath.—It may seem to be sedentary in its attitude, and motionless in its situation. But it is continually sailing† through the depths of the sky; and, in the space of twelve months, finishes the mighty voyage. Which

* A learned writer, I think Dr. Derham, has somewhere an observation to this purpose.—That the loftiest summits of hills, and the most enormous ridges of mountains, are no real objection to the globular or round form of the earth. Because, however they may render it, to our limited sight, vastly uneven and protuberant; yet, they bear no more proportion to the entire surface of the terraqueous ball, than a particle of dust, casually dropt on the mathematician's globe, bears to its whole circumference. Consequently, the rotund figure is no more destroyed in the former case, than in the latter.—On the same principle, I have not thought it necessary to take any notice of the comparatively small difference between the polar and equatorial diameter of the earth.

† With what an amazing speed this vessel (if I may carry on the allusion) filled with a multitude of nations, and freighted with all their possessions makes her way through the ethereal space.

The sun, which seems to perform its daily stages through the sky, is, in this respect,* fixed and immoveable. It is the great axle of heaven, about which the globe we inhabit, and other more spacious orbs, wheel their stated courses.—The sun, though seemingly smaller than the dial it illuminates, is abundantly larger* than the whole earth, on which so many lofty mountains rise, and such vast oceans roll. A line, extending from side to side, through the centre of that resplendent orb, would measure more than eight hundred thousand miles; a girdle, formed to go round its circumference, would require a length of millions; were its solid contents to be estimated, the account would overwhelm our understanding, and be almost beyond the power of language to express.‡—Are we startled at these reports of philosophy? Are we ready to cry out, in a transport of surprise, how mighty is the Being who kindled such a prodigious fire; and keeps alive, from age to age, such an enormous mass of flame? —Let us attend to our philosophic guides, and we shall be brought acquainted with speculations more enlarged and more amazing.

The sun, with all its attendant planets, is but a very little part of the grand machine of the universe. Every star, though in appearance no bigger than the diamond that glitters upon a lady's ring, is really a vast globe, like the sun in size and in glory; no less spacious, no less luminous, than the radiant source of our day. So that every star is not barely a world, but the centre of a magnificent system; has a retinue of worlds

* I say in this respect, that I may not seem to forget, or exclude the revolution of the sun round its own axis.

† A hundred thousand times, according to the lowest reckoning. Sir Isaac Newton computes the sun to be 900,000 times bigger than the earth.—*Religious Philosopher*, p. 749.

‡ Dr. Derham, after having calculated the dimensions of the planets, adds;—"Amazing as these masses are, they are all far outdone by that stupendous globe of light, the sun; which, as it is the fountain of light and heat to all the planets about it, so doth it far surpass them all in its bulk; its apparent diameter being computed at 822,148 English miles, its ambit at 2,582,873 miles, and its solid contents at 290,971,000,000,000."—*Astro. Theol.* B. i. C. 2.

irradiated by its beams, and revolving round its attractive influence. All which are lost to our sight, in unmeasurable wilds of æther. That the stars appear like so many diminutives, and scarce distinguishable points, is owing to their immense and inconceivable distance. Immense and inconceivable indeed it is; since a ball shot from the loaded cannon, and flying with unabated rapidity, must travel at this impetuous rate almost seven hundred thousand years,* before it could reach the nearest of those twinkling luminaries.

Can any thing be more wonderful than these observations? Yes; there are truths far more stupendous, there are scenes far more extensive. As there is no end of the almighty Maker's greatness; so no imagination can set limits to his creating hand.—Could you soar beyond the moon, and pass through all the planetary choir; could you wing your way to the highest apparent star, and take your stand on one of those loftiest pinnacles of heaven; you would there see other skies expanded; another sun distributing his inexhaustible beams by day; other stars, that gild the horrors of the alternate night; and other,† perhaps nobler systems, established; established, in unknown profusion, through the boundless dimensions of space.—Nor does the dominion of the universal Sovereign terminate there. Even at the end of this vast tour, you would find yourself advanced no farther than the suburbs of creation; arrived only at the frontiers of the great Jehovah's kingdom.‡

* See Religious Philosopher, p. 819.

† See Astro. Theology, B. II. Ch. II.—where the author, having assigned various reasons to support this theory of our modern astronomers, adds;—"Besides the fore-mentioned strong probabilities, we have this farther recommendation of such an account of the universe, that is far more magnificent, and worthy of the infinite Creator, than any other of the narrower schemes."

‡ Job, after a most beautiful dissertation on the mighty works of God, as they are distributed through universal nature, from the heights of heaven to the very depths of hell, closes the magnificent account with this acknowledgment; Lo! these are parts of his ways. Or, as the original word more literally signifies, and may, I think, be more elegantly rendered: These are only the skirts, the very outermost borders of his works: no more than a small preface to the immense

And do they tell me, that the sun, the moon, and all the planets, are but a little part of his works? How great then are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders!*—And if so, what is the Creator himself! How far exalted above all praise! Who is so high, that He looks down on the highest of these dazzling spheres, and sees even the summit of creation in a vale; so great, that this prodigious extent of space is but a point in his presence; and all this confluence of worlds as the lightest atom that fluctuates in air, and sports in the meridian ray!†

Thou most sublime and incomprehensibly glorious God, how am I ovewhelmed with awe! how sunk into the lowest prostration of mind! when I consider thy "excellent greatness," and my own utter insignificancy?—And have I, excessively mean as I am, have I entertained any conceited apprehensions of myself? Have I felt the least elatement of thought, in the presence of so majestic and adorable a Being? How should this wound me with sorrow, and cover me with confusion!—O my God, was I possessed of all the high

volume of the creation.—From the Hebrew קצות extremities, I cannot forbear thinking on the extreme and very attenuated fibres of the root, when compared with the whole substance of the trunk; or on the exquisitely small size of the capillary vessels, when compared with the whole structure of the body.—*Job* xxvi. 14.

* Dan. iv. 3.

† This puts me mind of a very fine remark on a scriptural beauty, and a solid correction of the common translation, made by that learned, sagacious, and devout expositor, Vitringa.—*Isai.* xl. 15. We find it written of the Supreme Being, That he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. Which our critic observes, is neither answerable to the import of the original, nor consonant to the structure of the discourse. The prophet had no intention to inform mankind what the Almighty could do, with regard to the islands, if he pleased to exert uncontrollable power. His design was to show how insignificant, or rather what mere nothings they are, in his esteem, and before his majesty.—The islands, says he, though so spacious as to afford room for the erection of kingdoms, and the abode of nations; though so strong as to withstand, for many thousands of years, the raging and reiterated assaults of the whole watery world; are yet, before the adored Jehovah, small as the minutest grain, which the eye can scarce discern; light as the feathered mote, which the least breath hurries away like a tempest.—אים כרק יקח־ל Insulæ sunt ut leve quid, quod avolat. The deep-rooted islands are as the volatile atom, which, by the gentlest undulations of the air, is wafted to and fro, in perpetual agitation.

perfections which accomplish and adorn the angels of light; amidst all these noble endowments, I would fall down in the deepest abasement at thy feet. Lost in the infinitely superior blaze of thy uncreated glories, I would confess myself to be nothing, to be less than nothing, and vanity. How much more ought I to maintain the most unfeigned humiliation before thy divine Majesty, who am not only dust and ashes, but a compound of ignorance, imperfection, and depravity!

While beholding this vast expanse, I learn my own extreme meanness, I would also discover the abject littleness of all terrestrial things.—What is the earth, with all her ostentatious scenes, compared with this astonishingly grand furniture of the skies? What but a dim speck, hardly perceivable in the map of the universe? It is observed by a very judicious writer,* that if the sun himself, which enlightens this part of the creation, was extinguished, and all the host of planetary worlds, which move about him, were annihilated; they would not be missed, by an eye that can take in the whole compass of nature, any more than a grain of sand upon the sea-shore. The bulk of which they consist, and the space which they occupy, is so exceedingly little in comparison of the whole, that their loss would scarce leave a blank in the immensity of God's works.—If, then, not our globe only, but this whole system, be so very diminutive, what is a kingdom, or a country? what are a few lordships, or the so much admired patrimonies of those who are styled wealthy?† When I measure them with my own little pittance, they swell into proud and bloated dimensions; but, when I take the universe for my standard, how scanty is their size, how contemptible their figure! They shrink into pompous nothings.‡

When the keen-eyed eagle soars above all the fea-

* Spect. Vol. VIII. No. 565.

† Juvat inter sidera vagantem divitum pavimenta ridere, et totam cum auro suo terram.—*Sen.*

‡ Terrellæ grandia inania.—*Watts's Hor. Lyr.*

thered race, and leaves their very sight below; when she wings her way, with direct ascent, up the steep of heaven; and, steadily gazing on the meridian sun, accounts its beaming splendours all her own: does she then regard, with any solicitude, the mote that is flying in the air, or the dust which she shook from her feet? And shall this eternal mind, which is capable of contemplating its Creator's glory, which is intended to enjoy the visions of his countenance; shall this eternal mind, endued with such great capacities, and made for such exalted ends, be so ignobly ambitious, as to sigh for the tinsels of state; or so poorly covetous, as to grasp after ample territories on a needle's point?—No; under the influence of such considerations, I feel my sentiments expand, and my wishes acquire a turn of sublimity. My throbbing desires after wordly grandeur die away, and I find myself, if not possessed of power, yet superior to its charms. Too long, must I own, have my affections been pinioned by vanity, and immured in this earthly clod. But these thoughts break the shackles;* these objects open the door of liberty. My soul, fired by such noble prospects, weighs anchor from this little nook, and coasts no longer about its contracted shores; dotes no longer on its painted shells. The immensity of things is her range, and an infinity of bliss is her aim.

Behold this immense expanse, and admire the condescension of thy God.—In this manner, an inspired and princely astronomer improved his survey of the nocturnal heavens. When I consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; I am smitten with wonder at thy glory, and cry out in a transport of gratitude,

* The soul of man was made to walk the skies,
Delightful outlet of her prison here!
There, disencumber'd from her chains, the ties
Of toys terrestrial, she can rove at large;
There freely can respire, dilate, extend,
In full proportion let loose all her powers.
Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest him?* "How amazing, how charming, is that Divine Benignity which is pleased to bow down its sacred regards to so foolish and worthless a creature! yea, disdains not, from the height of infinite exaltation, to extend its kind providential care to our most minute concerns!—This is amazing. But that the everlasting Sovereign should give his Son to be made flesh, and become our Saviour! shall I call it a miracle of condescending goodness? Rather, what are all miracles, what are all mysteries, to this ineffable gift!"

Had the brightest archangel been commissioned to come down, with the olive-branch of peace in his hand, signifying his eternal Maker's readiness to be reconciled—on our bended knees, with tears of joy, and a torrent of thankfulness, we ought to have received the transporting news. But when, instead of such an angelic envoy, he sends his only-begotten Son—his Son, beyond all thought illustrious, to make us the gracious overture:—sends him from the "habitation of his holiness and glory," to put on the infirmities of mortality, and dwell in a tabernacle of clay:—sends him, not barely to make us a transient visit, but to abide many years in our inferior and miserable world:—sends him not to exercise dominion over monarchs, but to wear out his life in the ignoble form of a servant; and, at last, to make his exit under the infamous character of a malefactor! Was ever love like this? Did ever grace stoop so low?†—Should the sun be shorn of all his

* Psal. viii. 3, 4.

† This reminds me of a very noble piece of sacred oratory, where, in a fine series of the most beautiful gradations, the apostle displays the admirable condescending kindness of our Saviour.—He thought it no robbery, it was his indisputable right, to be equal with the infinite, self-existent, immortal God. Yet, in mercy to sinners, he emptied himself of the incommunicable honours, and laid aside the robes of incomprehensible glory.—When he entered upon his mediatorial state, instead of acting in the grand capacity of universal Sovereign, he took upon him the form of a servant, and not the form of those ministering spirits, whose duty is dignity itself; who are throned, though adoring.—He took not on him the nature of angels, but

radiant honours, and degraded into a clod of the valleys; should all the dignitaries of heaven be deposed from their thrones, and degenerate into insects of a day; great, great would be the abasement: but nothing to thine, most blessed Jesus; nothing to thine, thou Prince of Peace; when for us men, and for our salvation, thou didst not abhor the coarse accommodations of the manger; thou didst not decline even the gloomy horrors of the grave.

'Tis well the sacred oracles have given this doctrine the most explicit confirmation, and evidence quite incontestable. Otherwise, a favour so undeserved, so unexpected, and rich beyond all imagination, might stagger our belief.—Could He, who launches all these planetary globes through the illimitable void, and leads them on, from age to age, in their extensive career; could He resign his hands to be confined by the girding cord, and his back to be ploughed by the bloody scourge?—Could He, who crowns all the stars with inextinguishable brightness, be himself defiled with spitting, and disfigured with the thorny scar?—It is the greatest of wonders, and yet the surest of truths.

O! ye mighty orbs, that roll along the spaces of the sky—I wondered, a little while ago, at your vast dimensions, and ample circuits. But now my amazement ceases; or rather, is entirely swallowed up by a much more stupendous subject. Methinks, your enormous bulk is shrivelled to an atom; your prodigious revolutions are contracted to a span; while I muse upon the far more elevated heights, and unfathomable depths;

stooped incomparably lower: assumed a body of animated dust, and was made in the likeness of men; those inferior and depraved creatures.—Astonishing condescension! but not sufficient for the overflowing richness of the Redeemer's love. For, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself farther still: occupied the lowest place, where all was low and ignoble. He not only submitted to the yoke of the law, but also bore the infirmities, and ministered to the necessities of mortals. He even washed the feet of others, and had not where to lay his own head.—Yea, he carried his meritorious humiliation to the very deepest degrees of possible abasement. He became obedient unto death,—and not to a common or natural death, but a death more infamous than the gibbet; more torturous than the rack—even the accursed death of the cross.—*Phil.* ii. 6, 7, 8.

the infinitely more extended lengths, and unlimited breadths, of this love of God in Christ Jesus.*

Contemplating this stately expanse, I see a mirror which represents, in the most awful colours, the heinousness of human guilt.—Ten thousand volumes, wrote on purpose to display the aggravations of my various acts of disobedience, could not so effectually convince me of their inconceivable enormity, as the consideration of that all-glorious Person;† who, to make an atonement for them, spilt the last drop of his blood.—I have sinned, may every child of Adam say; and what shall I do unto thee, O thou observer of men?‡ Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Vain commutation! and such as would be rejected by the blessed God with the utmost abhorrence.—Will all the potentates, that sway the sceptre in a thousand kingdoms, devote their royal and honoured lives to rescue an obnoxious creature from the stroke of vengeance? Alas! it must cost more, incomparably more, to expiate the malignity of sin, and save a guilty wretch from hell.—Will all the principalities of heaven be content to assume my nature, and resign themselves to death for my pardon?§ Even this would be too mean

* Eph. iii. 18, 19.

† Quo quisque altius ascendit in agnitione Christi, eo profundius peccati atrocitatem cognoscet.

‡ Job, vii. 20. Not preserver, as it stands in our version, but observer of men. Which phrase, as it denotes the exact and incessant inspection of the divine eye—as it intimates the absolute impossibility that any transgression should escape the divine notice—is evidently most proper, both to assign the reason, and heighten the emphasis of the context.

§ Milton sets this thought in a very poetical and striking light.—All the sanctities of heaven stand round the throne of the supreme Majesty. God foresees and foretells the fall of man: the ruin which will unavoidably ensue on his transgression; and the utter impossibility of his being able to extricate himself from the abyss of misery.

> He, with his whole posterity, must die;
> Die he, or Justice must; unless for him
> Some other able, and as willing, pay
> The rigid satisfaction, death for death.

a satisfaction for inexorable justice, too scanty a reparation of God's injured honour. So flagrant is human guilt, that nothing but a victim of infinite dignity could constitute an adequate propitiation.—He who said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" let there be a firmament, and immediately the blue curtains floated in the sky; He must take flesh, He must feel the fierce torments of crucifixion, and pour out his soul in agonies, if ever such transgressors are pardoned.

How vast is that debt, which all the wealth of both the Indies cannot discharge! How vitiated that habit of body, which all the drugs produced by nature herself cannot rectify! But how much more ruined was thy condition, O my soul! how much more heinous were thy crimes! since nothing less than the sufferings and death of Messiah, the Son of God, and radiant image of his glory, could effect thy recovery, or cancel thy iniquity.—Though, perhaps, thou are not sunk so very deep in pollution as some of the most abandoned profligates, yet remember the inestimable ransom paid to redeem thee from everlasting destruction. Remember this, and "never open thy mouth any more,"* either to murmur at the divine chastise-

After which affecting representation, intended to raise the most tender emotions of pity, the following inquiry is addressed to all the surrounding angels:

> Say, heavenly pow'rs, where shall we find such love?
> Which of you will be mortal, to redeem
> Man's mortal crime? and die, the dead to save?
> He ask'd; but all the heavn'ly choir stood mute,
> And silence was in heav'n.—

There is, to me at least, an inimitable spirit and beauty in the last circumstance.—That such an innumerable multitude of generous and compassionate beings, should be struck dumb with surprise and terror, at the very mention of the deadly forfeiture and ransom set! no language is so eloquent as this silence. Words could not possibly have expressed, in so emphatical a manner, the dreadful nature of the task; the absolute inability of any or all creatures to execute it; the supereminent and matchless love of the eternal Son, in undertaking the tremendous work; not only without reluctance, but unsought and unimplored; with readiness, alacrity, and delight.—*Paradise Lost*, B. iii. l. 209. Edit. Bentl.

* Ezek. xvi. 63.

ments, or to glory in thy own attainments. Remember this, and even "loathe thyself* for the multitude of thy provocations," and thy great baseness.

Once more, let me view this beautiful, this magnificent expanse; and conceive some juster apprehensions of the unknown richness of my Saviour's atonement. —I am informed by a writer, who cannot mistake, that the high priest of my profession, who was also the sacrifice for my sins, is higher than the heavens;† more exalted in dignity, more bright with glory, than all the heavenly mansions, and all their illustrious inhabitants. If my heart was humbled at the consideration of its excessive guilt, how do all my drooping powers revive at this delightful thought? The poor criminal, that seemed to be tottering on the very brink of the infernal pit, is raised by such a belief, even to the portals of Paradise. My self-abasement, I trust, will always continue, but my fears, under the influence of such a conviction, are quite gone.‡ I do not, I cannot doubt the efficacy of this propitiation. While I see a glimpse of its matchless excellency, and verily believe myself interested in its merits, I know not what it is to feel any misgiving suspicions, but am steadfast in faith, and joyful through hope.

* Ezek. xxxvi. 31. † Heb. vii. 26.

‡ I am sorry to find that some of my readers were a little disgusted at this expression, "My fears are quite gone." As thinking it discovered a tincture of arrogance in the writer, and tended to discourage the weak Christian. But I hope a more mature consideration will acquit me from both these charges.—For, what has the author said? Only that at some peculiarly happy moments, when the Holy Ghost bears witness of Christ in his heart, and he is favoured with a glimpse of the Redeemer's matchless excellency—that in these brighter intervals of life, his trembling fears, with regard to the decisive sentence of the great tribunal, are turned into pleasing expectations. And what is there in such a declaration, offensive to the strictest modesty, or dispiriting to the weakest believer? Instead of creating discouragement, it points out the way to obtain a settled tranquillity. Its natural tendency is, to engage the serious mind in a more constant and attentive meditation on the unknown merits of the divine Mediator. And were we more thoroughly acquainted, more deeply affected, with his unutterable dignity, I am persuaded, our uneasy apprehensions would proportionably vanish, our faith be established, our hopes brightened, and our joys enlarged.

Be my iniquities like debts of millions of talents, here is more than full payment for all that prodigious sum. Let the enemy of mankind, and accuser of the brethren, load me with invectives; this one plea, a Divine Redeemer died, most thoroughly quashes every indictment. For, though there be much turpitude, and manifold transgressions, "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus."—Nay, were I chargeable with all the vilest deeds, which have been committed in every age of the world, by every nation of men; even in this most deplorable case, I need not sink into despair. Even such guilt, though grievous beyond all expression, is not to be compared with that abundance of grace and righteousness, which dwell in the incarnate Divinity.—How great, how transcendently glorious, are the perfections of the adored Jehovah! so great, so superlatively precious, is the expiation of the dying Jesus. 'Tis impossible for the human mind to exalt this atonement* too highly; 'tis impossible for the humble penitent to confide in it too steadily. The Scriptures, the Scriptures of eternal Truth have said it (exult, my soul, in the belief of it), that the blood on which we rely, is God's own blood;† and therefore all-sufficient to expiate, omnipotent to save.

David, that egregious sinner, but more exemplary saint, seems to have been well acquainted with this comfortable truth. What else can be the import of that very remarkable, but most devout declaration,—Thou shalt purge me‡ with hyssop, and I shall be

* This doctrine, though rich with consolation to the ruined sinner, yet is it not likely to open a door for licentiousness; and embolden transgressors to prosecute their vices?—No: it is the most powerful motive to that genuine repentance, which flows from an unfeigned love of God; and operates in a hearty detestation of all sin. One, who knew the unmeasurable goodness of the Lord, and was no stranger to the sinful perverseness of our nature, says, 'There is mercy with thee: therefore shalt thou be feared.' Psal. cxxx. 4.—Words, full to my purpose; which at once add the highest authority to this sentiment, and direct our minds to its proper influence and due improvement.

† Acts xx. 28.

‡ Psal. li. 7. 'Thou shalt purge.' I prefer this translation before the new one; because this speaks the language of a more stedfast belief

clean; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.—"I have been guilty, I must confess, of the most complicated and shocking crimes; crimes, inflamed by every aggravating circumstance, with regard to myself, my neighbour, and my God. Myself, who have been blessed above men, and the distinguished favourite of Providence; my neighbour, who in the most dear and tender interests, has been irreparably injured; my God, who might justly expect the most grateful returns of duty, instead of such enormous violations of his law. Yet, all horrid and execrable as my offence is, it is nothing to the superabundant merit of that great Redeemer, who was promised from the foundations of the world; in whom all my father's trusted; who is the hope of all the ends of the earth. Though my conscience be more loathsome with adulterous impurity than the dunghill; though treachery and murder have rendered it even black as the gloom of hell; yet, washed in the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,"* I shall be—I say not pure only, this were a disparagement to the efficacy of my Saviour's death; but I shall be fair as the lily, and white as the snow. Nay, let me not derogate from the glorious object of my confidence; cleansed by this sovereign, sanctifying stream, I shall be fairer than the full-blown lily, whiter than the new-fallen snows."

Power, saith the Scripture, belongeth unto God.†—And in what majestic lines is this attribute of Jehovah written throughout the whole volume of the creation? Especially through those magnificent pages, unfolded in yonder starry regions; which are therefore styled, by the sweet and seraphic singer of Israel, "the firmament of his power."‡ Because the grand exploits of Omnipotence are there displayed with the utmost pomp, and recorded in the most legible characters.

and gives the highest honour to the divine goodness. Were the words intended to bear no more than the common petitionary sense, and not to be expressive of a noble pleriophery of faith; they would rather have been וטהרני and כבסני, imperatives, not futures.

* Zech. xiii. 1. † Psal. lxii. 11. ‡ Psal. cl. 1.

Who that looks upward to the midnight sky, and, with an eye of reason, beholds its rolling wonders, who can forbear inquiring, of what were those mighty orbs formed?—Amazing to relate! they were produced without materials: they sprung from emptiness itself. The stately fabric of universal nature emerged out of nothing.—What instruments were used by the Supreme Architect, to fashion the parts with such exquisite niceness, and give so beautiful a polish to the whole? How was all connected into one finely-proportioned, and nobly-finished structure?—A bare fiat accomplished all. Let them be, said God. He added no more; and immediately the marvellous edifice arose, adorned with every beauty; displaying innumerable perfections; and declaring, amidst enraptured seraphs, its great Creator's praise. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."* What forceful machinery fixed some of those ponderous globes on an immoveable basis? What irresistible impulse bowled others through the circuit of the heavens? What coercive energy confined their impetuous courses within limits astonishingly large, yet most minutely true?—Nothing but his sovereign will. For all things were at first constituted, and all to this day abide "according to his ordinance."

Without any toilsome assiduity or laborious process, to raise—to touch—to speak such a multitude of immense bodies into being, to launch them through the spaces of the sky, as an arrow from the hand of a giant;

* If this thought is admitted a second time, and suffered to ennoble the next paragraph, it is partly because of its unequalled sublimity; partly because it awakens the most grand idea of creating power; and partly, because the practice of the psalmist, an authority too great to be controverted, is my precedent.—The beautiful stanza quoted from psal. xxxiii. 6. is a proof how thoroughly the royal poet entered into the majesty of the mosaic narration. The repetition of the sentiment, ver. 9, intimates how peculiarly he was charmed, with that noble manner of describing the divine operations; while the turn of his own composition shows how perfectly he possessed the same elevated way of thinking. And this, long before Longinus wrote the celebrated treatise, which has taught the Heathen, as well as the Christian world, to admire the dignity of the Jewish legislator's style.—Vid. *Longin. de Subl.* Sect. IX.

—to impress on such unwieldy masses a motion, far outstripping the swiftness of the winged creation*—and to continue them in the same rapid whirl for thousand and thousands of years;—what an amazing instance of infinite might is this!—Can any thing be impossible to the Lord, the Lord God; the Creator and Controller of all the ends of the earth, all the regions of the universe? Rather, is not all that we count difficult, perfect ease to that glorious Being, who only spake and the world was made?† Who only gave command, and the stupendous axle was lodged fast, the lofty wheels moved complete?—What a sure defence, O my soul, is this everlasting strength of thy God! Be this thy continual refuge in the article of danger, this thy never-failing resource in every time of need.

What cannot this uncontrollable power of the great Jehovah effect for his people? Be their miseries ever so galling, cannot this God relieve them? Be their wants ever so numerous, cannot this God supply them? Be their corruptions within ever so inveterate, or their temptations without ever so importunate; cannot this mighty, mighty God, subdue the former, and fortify them against the latter?—Should trials, with an incessant vehemence, sift thee as wheat; should tribulation, with a weight of woes, almost grind thee to powder; should pleasure, with her bewitching smiles, solicit thee to delicious ruin; yet "hold thee fast by God," and lay thy help upon him that is om-

* To give one instance of this remark:—The earth, in the diurnal revolution which it performs on its own axis, whirls about at the rate of above a thousand miles an hour. And as the great orbit, which it describes annually round the sun, is reckoned at 540 millions of miles, it must travel near a million and a half each day.—What a force must be requisite to protrude so vast a globe; and wheel it on, loaded as it is with huge mountains and ponderous rocks, at such a prodigious degree of rapidity! It surpasses human conception.—How natural, how pertinent, how almost necessary, after such an observation, is the acknowledgment made by holy Job! I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought, no imaginable scheme can be withholden from thee, can lie beyond thy power to execute.—Chap. xlii. 2.

† Psal. xxxiii. 9.

nipotent.* Thou canst not be involved in such calamitous circumstances, or exposed to such imminent peril; but thy God, whom thou servest, is able to deliver thee from the one, and to support thee under the other.—To support! to deliver! Let me not dishonour the unlimited greatness of his power. He is able to exalt thee from the deepest distress, to the most triumphant joy; and to make even a complication of evils work together for thy everlasting good. He is able, not only to accomplish what I have been speaking, but to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.†

* It is a most charming description, as well as a most comfortable promise, which we find in Isa. xl. 29, 30, 31.—He giveth power to the feeble; and to them that have no might at all, He not only imparteth, but increaseth strength; making it to abound, where it did not so much as exist.—Without this aid of Jehovah, even the youths, amidst the very prime of their vigour and activity, shall become languid in their work, and weary in their course. And the young men, to whose resolution and abilities nothing seemed impracticable, shall not only not succeed, but utterly fail, and miscarry in their various enterprises.—Whereas, they that wait upon the Lord, and confide in his grace, shall press on with a generous ardour, from one degree of religious improvement to another. Instead of exhausting, they shall renew their strength; difficulties shall animate, and toil invigorate them. They shall mount up, as with soaring wings, above all opposition; they shall be carried through every discouragement as eagles cleave the yielding air. They shall run, with speed and alacrity, the way of God's commandments, and not be weary: they shall hold on, (יֵלְכוּ progredientur, carpent iter) with constancy and perseverance, in those peaceful paths, and not faint; but arrive at the end of their progress, and receive the prize of their high calling.

To this most cheering doctrine, permit me to add its no less beautiful and delightful contrast. Eliphaz, speaking of the enemies of the righteous, says—לֹא נִכְחַד קִימָתֵנוּ—which is rendered by a great critic in sacred learning, Nihil excisum factio nobis adversaria.—We should reckon our language acquitted itself tolerably well, if, when depreciating the abilities of an adversary, it should represent them weak as the scorched thread, feeble as the dissolving smoke. But these are cold forms of speech, compared with the eloquence of the east. According to the genius of our bible, all the power that opposes the godly, is a mere nothing; or to speak with a more emphatical air of contempt, a destroyed, an extirpated nothing.—Admire this expression, ye that are charmed with daring images, and (what Tully calls verbum ardens) a spirited and glowing diction.—Remember this declaration, ye that fight the good fight of faith. The united force of all your enemies, be it ever so formidable to the eye of flesh, is before your almighty guardian, Nihil nihilissimum, not only nothing, but less than nothing, and vanity.—*Job* xxii. 20.

† I should in this place avoid swelling the notes any farther, was it not

O! the wretched condition of the wicked, who have this Lord of all power for their enemy! O! the desperate madness of the ungodly, who provoke the Almighty to jealousy!—Besotted creatures! are you able to contend with your Maker, and enter the lists against incensed Omnipotence? Can you bear the fierceness of his wrath, or sustain the vengeance of his lifted arm? At his presence, though awfully serene, the hills melt like wax, and the "mountains skip like frighted lambs." At the least intimation of his displeasure, the foundations of nature rock, and the "pillars of heaven tremble." How then can a withered leaf endure, when "his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire?" Or can any thing screen a guilty worm, when the great and terrible God shall whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on inexorable judgment? When that hand which shoots the planets, masses of excessive bulk,* with such surprising rapidity, through the sky; that hand, which darts the comets to such unmeasurable distances, beyond the orbit of our remotest planet, beyond the pursuit of the strongest eye; when that hand is stretched out to punish, can the munition of rocks, the intervention of seas, or even interposing worlds, divert the blow?—Consider this,

to take notice of the inimitable passage quoted above, and to be found Eph. iii. 20.—which, if I do not greatly mistake, is the most complete representation of divine power that it is possible for words to frame.—To do all that our tongue can ask, is a miracle of might; but we often think more than we can express, and are actuated with "groanings unutterable." Yet, to answer these vast desires is not beyond the accomplishment of our heavenly Father.—Nay, to make his gifts and his blessings commensurate to the largest stretch of human expectations, is a small thing with the God of glory. He is able to do above all that the most enlarged apprehension can imagine; yea, to do abundantly more, exceeding abundantly more, than the mind itself, in the utmost exertion of all its faculties, is capable of wishing, or knows how to conceive.

* One of the planets (Saturn) is supposed to be more than 90 times as big as the globe on which we live. According to the same calculation, the largest of the planets (Jupiter) is above 200 times vaster than this vast collection of spacious forests, towering mountains, extensive continents, and boundless oceans.—Such enormous magnitude, winged with such prodigious speed,—it raises astonishment beyond expression.—With God is terrible majesty! Job xxxvii. 22.—Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?—*Rev.* xv. 4.

ambition; and bow thy haughty crest. Consider this, disobedience; and bend thy iron sinew. O! consider this, all ye that forget, or affront, the tremendous Jehovah. He can, by a single act of his will, lay the universe in utter ruin; and can He want power to bring you, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to the dust of death, or to the flames of hell? He has,—I say not, ten thousand lightnings to scorch you to ashes; ten thousand thunders to crush you into atoms; but, what is unspeakably more dreadful, He has an army of terrors, even in the look of his angry countenance! His very frown is worse than destruction!

I cannot dismiss this subject, without admiring the patience of the blessed God; who, though so strong and powerful, yet "is provoked every day."—Surely, as is his majesty, so is his mercy; his pity altogether commensurate to his power. If I vilify but the name of an earthly monarch, I lose my liberty, and am confined to the dungeon. If I appear in arms, and draw the sword against my national sovereign, my life is forfeited, and my very blood will scarce atone for the crime. But thee I have dishonoured, O! thou King immortal and invisible! Against thee my breast has fomented secret disaffection, my behaviour has risen up in open rebellion, and yet I am spared, yet I am preserved. Instead of being banished from thy presence, I sit at thy table, and am fed from thy hand. Instead of pursuing me with thunder-bolts of vengeance, thy favours surround me on every side. That arm, that injured arm, which might justly fall, with irretrievable ruin, on a traitor's head, is most graciously stretched out to caress him with the tenderest endearments; to cherish him with every instance of parental kindness. —O! thou mightiest, thou best of Beings, how am I pained at my very soul, for such shameful and odious disengenuity! Let me always abominate myself as the basest of creatures; but adore that unwearied long-suffering of thine, which refuses to be irritated; love that unremitted goodness, which no acts of ingratitude

could stop, or so much as check, in its gracious current. O! let this stubborn heart, which duty could not bind, which threatenings could not awe, be the captive, the willing captive, of such triumphant beneficence.

I have often been struck with wonder at that almighty skill, which weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; which proportioned the waters in the hollow of his hand, and adjusted the dust of the earth* by a measure. But how much more marvellous is that magnificent economy which poised the stars with inexpressible nicety, and meted out the heavens with a span! Where all is prodigiously vast, immensely various, and yet more than mathematically exact. Surely, the wisdom of God manifests itself in the skies, and shines in those lucid orbs; shines on the contemplative mind with a lustre incomparably brighter than that which their united splendours transmit to the eye.

Behold yonder countless multitude of globes; consider their amazing magnitude; regard them as the sovereigns of so many systems, each accompanied with his planetary equipage. Upon this supposition, what a multiplicity of mighty spheres must be perpetually running their rounds in the upper regions! Yet none mistake their way, or wander from the goal, though

* Isa. xl. 12. The dust of the earth, in this sublime scripture, signifies the dry land, or solid part of our globe; which is placed in contradistinction to the whole collection of fluid matter, mentioned in the preceding clause.—Perhaps this remarkable expression may be intended to intimate, not only the extreme niceness, which stated the dimensions of the world in general, or in the gross; but also that particular exactness, with which the very smallest materials that constitute its frame (not excepting each individual atom) were calculated and disposed:—*q. d.* It is a small thing to say, No such enormous redundancies as unnecessary ridges of mountains, were suffered to subsist. There was not so much as the least grain of sand superfluous, or a single particle of dust deficient. As the grand aim of the description is to celebrate the consummate wisdom exemplified in the creation, and to display that perfect proportion, with which every part tallies, coincides, and harmonizes with the whole, I have taken leave to alter the word of our English translation, comprehend, and introduce, in its stead, a term equally faithful to the Hebrew, and more significative of the prophet's precise idea.

they pass through trackless and unbounded fields. None fly off from their orbits into extravagant excursions; none press in upon their centre with too near an approach; none interfere with each other in their perennial passage, or intercept the kindly communications of another's influence.* But all their rotations proceed in eternal harmony, keeping such time, and observing such laws, as are most exquisitely adapted to the perfection of the whole.

While I contemplate this "excellent wisdom, which made the heavens," and attunes all their motions, how am I abashed at that mixture of arrogance and folly, which has at any time inclined me to murmur at thy dispensations. O Lord! what is this, but a sort of implicit treason against thy supremacy, and a tacit denial of thy infinite understanding?—Hast thou so regularly placed such a wonderful diversity of systems through the spaces of the universe?—Didst thou, without any probationary essays, without any improving retouches, speak them into the most consummate perfection?—Dost thou continually superintend all their circumstances, with a sagacity that never mistakes the minutest tittle of propriety? And shall I be so unaccountably stupid, as to question the justness of thy discernment, in "choosing my inheritance, and fixing the bounds of my habitation?"—Not a single erratum in modelling the structure, determining the distance,† and conducting the career of unnumbered worlds! And, shall my peevish humour presume to

* The interception of light, by means of an eclipse, happens very rarely, and then is of so short a continuance, as not to be at all inconvenient. Nay, it is attended with such circumstances as render it rather useful, than prejudicial.

† The sun in particular, (and let this serve as a specimen of that most curious exactness, with which the other celestial bodies are constituted, and all their circumstances regulated) the sun is formed of such a determinate magnitude, and placed at such a convenient distance, "as not to annoy, but only refresh us, and nourish the ground with its kindly warmth. If it was larger, it would set the earth on fire; if smaller, it would leave it frozen. If it was nearer us, we should be scorched to death; if farther from us, we should not be able to live for want of heat."—*Stackhouse's History of the Bible.*

censure thy interposition, with regard to the affairs of one inconsiderable creature, whose stature, in such a comparative view, is less than a span; and his present duration little more than a moment?

O! thou God, "in whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways," let such sentiments as now possess my thoughts be always lively on my heart! These shall compose my mind into a cheerful acquiescence, and a thankful submission; even when afflictions gall the sense, or disappointments break my schemes. Then shall I, like the grateful patriarch,* in all the changes of my condition, and even in the depths of distress, erect an altar of adoring resignation, and inscribe it with the apostle's motto, To God only wise. Then, shouldst thou give me leave to be the carver of my own fortunes, I would humbly desire to relinquish the grant, and recommit the disposal of myself to thy unerring beneficence; fully persuaded that thy counsels, though contrary to my froward inclinations, or even afflictive to my flesh, are incomparably more eligible than the blind impulse of my own will, however soothing to animal nature.

On a careless inspection, you perceive no accuracy or uniformity in the position of the heavenly bodies. They appear like an illustrious chaos, a promiscuous heap of shining globes; neither ranked in order, nor moving by line.—But what seems confusion, is all regularity. What carries a show of negligence, is really the result of the most masterly contrivance. You think, perhaps, they rove in their aërial flight, but they rove by the nicest rule, and without the least error. Their circuits, though seemingly devious; their mazes, though intricate to our apprehensions;† are marked out, not indeed with golden compasses, but by the infinitely more exact determinations of the all-wise Spirit.

* See Gen. xii. 7, 8.

† ——Mazes intricate,
Eccentric, intervolv'd; yet regular
Then most, when most irregular they seem.—*Milt.*

So, what wears the appearance of calamity, in the allotments appointed for the godly, has really the nature of a blessing. It issues from fatherly love, and will terminate in the richest good. If Joseph is snatched from the embraces of an indulgent parent, and abandoned to slavery in a foreign land, it is in order to save the holy family from perishing by famine, and to preserve "the seed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed." If he falls into the deepest disgrace, it is on purpose that he may rise to the highest honours.—Even the confinement of the prison, by the unsearchable workings of providence, opens his way to the right-hand of the throne itself.—Let the most afflicted servant of Jesus wait the final upshot of things; he will then discover the apparent expediency of all those tribulations which now, perhaps, he can hardly admit, without reluctance; or suffer, without some struggles of dissatisfaction. Then, the gushing tear, and the heaving sigh, will be turned into tides of gratitude, and hymns of holy wonder.

In the mean time, let no audacious railer presumptuously impeach the divine procedure; but, adoring where we cannot comprehend, let us expect the evolution of the mysterious plan. Then shall every eye perceive, that the seeming labyrinths of providence were the most direct and compendious way to effect his general purposes of grace, and to bring about each one's particular happiness.* —Then also shall it be clearly shown, in the presence of applauding worlds, why virtue pined in want, while vice rioted in affluence; why amiable innocence so often dragged the dungeon chain, while horrid guilt trailed the robe of state.—That day of universal audit, that day of everlasting retribution, will not only vindicate, but magnify, the whole management of heaven. The august sessions shall close

* ———The moral world,
Which, though to us it seems embroil'd, moves on
In higher order; fitted and impell'd
By wisdom's finest hand, and issuing all
In gen'ral good. *Thoms. Whint.* l. 286.

with this unanimous, this glorious acknowledgment: "Though clouds and darkness, impenetrable by any human scrutiny, were sometimes round about the supreme Conductor of things; yet righteousness and judgment were the constant habitation of his seat;* the invariable standard of all his administrations."—Thus (if I may illustrate the grandest truths by inferior occurrences?) while we view the arras, on the side of least distinction, it is void of any elegant fancy; without any nice strokes of art; nothing but a confused jumble of incoherent threads. No sooner is the piece beheld in its proper aspect, but the suspected rudeness vanishes, and the most curious arrangement takes place. We are charmed with designs of the finest taste, and figures of the most graceful form. All is shaped with symmetry; all is clad in beauty.

The goodness of God is most eminently displayed in the skies.—Could we take an understanding survey of whatever is formed by the Divine Architect, throughout the whole extent of material things, our minds would be transported with their excellencies, and our tongues echo back that great encomium, They are "good, very good."† Most beautiful‡ in themselves; contrived by unerring wisdom, and executed with inimitable skill. Most‡ useful in their functions, exactly fitting the places they fill, and completely answering the purposes for which they were intended. All the parts of the inanimate creation proclaim, both by their intrinsic and relative excellencies, the all-diffusive beneficence of their Maker.

* Psal. xcvii. 2. † Gen. i. 31.

‡‡ This καλοκαγαθια of the universe, and all its parts, has been very highly, and very justly extolled by the ancient enquirers into nature; and was, indeed, an illustrious scene spread before the sages of the heathen world, wherein to contemplate the goodness and the glories of the Supreme being.—It was nobly said by a pagan philosopher, on this occasion, "Εις εμφασιν μεταβληθηναι τον Θεον μελλοντα δημιουργειν, That God, when he undertook the work of creation, transformed himself into love."—But he need not transform himself into this amiable principle, for "God is love:" as was much more nobly said by one whom that philosopher would have termed a barbarian.—1 *John*, iv. 8.

How much more wonderful are the displays of divine indulgence, in the worlds of life! Because dead matter is incapable of delight, therefore the gracious Creator has raised innumerable ranks of perceptive existence; such as are qualified to taste his bounty, and enjoy each a happiness suited to its peculiar state. With this view, he furnished the regions of inferior nature with an order and series of sensitive beings. The waters teem with shoals of finny inhabitants. The dry land swarms with animals of every order. The dwellings of the firmament are occupied by multitudes of winged people. Not so much as a green leaf, philosophers say, but lodges, and accommodates its puny animalcule tenants.*—And wherefore this diversity, this profusion of living creatures; flying the air, treading the ground, and gliding through the paths of the sea? For this most glorious reason—That the eternal Sovereign may exercise his superabundant goodness; that his table may be furnished with millions and millions of guests; that he may fill, every hour, every moment, their mouths with food, or their hearts with gladness.

But, what a small theatre are three or four elements, for the operations of Jehovah's bounty? His magnificent liberality scorns such scanty limits. If you ask,

* A very celebrated poet, in a beautiful paragraph on this subject, informs his readers, that, All nature swarms with life. In subterranean cells, the earth heaves with vital motion. Even the hard stone, in the very inmost recesses of its impenetrable citadel, holds multitudes of animated inhabitants. The pulp of mellow fruit, and all the productions of the orchard, feed the invisible nations. Each liquid, whether of acid taste, or milder relish, abounds with various forms of sensitive existence. Nor is the pure stream, or transparent air, without their colonies of unseen people.—In which constitution of things we have a wonderful instance, not only of the divine goodness to those minute beings, in giving them a capacity for animal gratifications, but of his tender care for mankind, in making them imperceptible to our senses.

> ———These conceal'd
> By the kind art of forming heav'n, escape
> The grosser eye of man: For, if the worlds
> In worlds inclos'd should on his senses burst,
> From cares ambrosial, and the nectar'd bowl,
> He'd turn abhorrent; and in dead of night,
> When silence sleeps o'er all, be stunn'd with noise.
>
> *Thomson's Summer.*

Wherefore has He created all worlds, and replenished them with an unknown multiplicity of beings; rising one above another in an endless gradation of still richer endowments, and still nobler capacities? The answer is—For the manifestation of his own glory, and especially for the communication of his inexhaustible beneficence.*—The great Creator could propose no advantage to himself. His bliss is incapable of any addition. —"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made," He was supremely happy in his own independent and all-sufficient self. His grand design, therefore, in erecting so many stately fabrics, and peopling them with so many tribes of inhabitants, was, to transfuse his exuberant kindness, and impart felicity in all its forms. Ten thousand worlds stocked with ten thousand times ten thousand ranks of sensitive and intelligent existence, are so many spacious gardens; which, with rivers of communicated joy, this ever-flowing fountain waters continually.

Boundless,† and (which raises our idea of this divine principle, to the very highest degree of perfection) disinterested† munificence! How inexpressibly amiable is the blessed God, considered in this charming light! Is it possible to conceive any excellence so adorable and lovely as infinite benevolence, guided by unerring wisdom, and exerting almighty power, on purpose to make a whole universe happy! O my soul, what an irresistible attractive is here! What a most worthy object for thy most fervent affection! Shall now every

* A sacred writer, considering this delightful subject, and confining his observations within the narrow limits of his own country, cries out, with a mixture of amazement and gratitude, How great is his goodness, and how great is his bounty!—Who then can forbear being lost in wonder, and transported with delight, when he extends his survey to those infinitely more copious communications of divine bounty; which, like salutary and refreshing streams, run through all worlds, and make not only the little valleys of a single kingdom, but the immensity of creation laugh and sing!—*Zech.* ix. 17.

†† In this sense there is none good but one, that is God. None universally and essentially good. None, whose goodness extends itself, in an infinite variety of blessings to every capable object; or who always dispenses his favours from the sole principle of free and disinterested benevolence.

glittering toy become a rival to this transcendently beneficent Being, and rob him of thy heart?—No; let his all-creating arm teach thee to trust in the fulness of his sufficiency: let his all-superintending eye incline thee to acquiesce in the dispensations of his providence; and let his bounty, so freely vouchsafed, so amply diffused, induce thee to love Him with all the ardour of a grateful and admiring soul: induce thee to serve Him, not with a joyless awe, or slavish dread, but with unfeigned alacrity, and a delightful complacency.

If the goodness of God is so admirably seen in the works of nature, and the favours of Providence; with what a noble superiority does it even triumph in the mystery of redemption!* Redemption is the brightest mirror in which to contemplate this most lovely attribute of the Deity. Other gifts are only as mites from the Divine Treasury; but redemption opens, I had almost said exhausts, all the stores of indulgence and grace. Herein "God commendeth his love;"† not only manifests, but sets it off, as it were, with every bright and grand embellishment; manifests it in so stupendous a manner, that it is beyond parallel, beyond thought, "above all blessing and praise."—Was He not thy Son, everlasting God, thy only Son, the Son of thy bosom from eternal ages, the highest object of thy complacential delight? Was not thy love to this adorable Son incomparably greater than the tenderest

* In this, and other parts of the Contemplations, the reader will observe that the attributes of the Deity are represented as shining with more distinguished lustre in the wonders of redemption, than in the works of creation. If such remarks should seem to be unprecedented, or to stand in need of a vindication, permit me to subjoin the sentiments of a great critic, equally versed in both those sublime theories.—"In a perfect orator," he says, "Tully requires some skill in the nature of heavenly bodies; because his mind will become more extensive and unconfined; and, when he descends to treat of human affairs, he will both think and write in a more exalted and magnificent manner. For the same reason, that excellent master would have recommended the study of those great and glorious mysteries, which Revelation has discovered to us; to which the noblest parts of this system of the world are as much inferior, as the creature is less excellent than the Creator." *Spect.* Vol. VIII. No. 633,

† Rom. v. 8.

affection of any, or the united affections of all mortal parents? Was not the blessed Jesus more illustrious in excellency than all angels, more exalted in dignity than all heavens? Yet didst thou resign Him for poor mortals, for vile sinners!—Couldst thou see Him descend from his royal throne, and take up his abode in the sordid stable? see Him forego the homage of the seraphim, and stand exposed to the reproachful indignities of an insolent rabble? See him arraigned at the bar, and sentenced to death; numbered with malefactors, and nailed to the gibbet, bathed in his own innocent blood, and pouring out his soul in agonies of sorrow?—Could the Father, the Father himself, with unknown philanthropy,* say, "It shall, it shall, be so! my pity to rebellious man pleads and prevails. Awake, therefore, O sword,† edged with divine wrath; awake, and be sheathed in that immaculate breast; pierce that dearly beloved heart. I am content that my Son endure the sharpness of death, rather than sinful mortals perish for ever." Incomprehensible love! may it henceforward be the favourite subject of my meditation, more delightful to my musing mind, than applause to the ambitious ear! may it be the darling theme of my discourse; sweeter to my tongue than the droppings of the honeycomb to my taste! may it be my choicest comfort through all the changes of life; and my reviving cordial, even in the last extremities of dissolution itself!

A prophet contemplating, with a distant survey, this unexampled instance of Almighty love, is rapt into a transport of devotion. At a loss for proper acknowledgments, he calls upon the whole universe to aid his labouring breast, and supply his lack of praise. Sing melodiously, ye vaulted heavens; exult, and even leap for gladness, thou cumberous earth; ye mountains, break your long silence, and burst into peals of loudest

* Philanthropy, that is, loving kindness to man.

† Zech. xiii. 7.

acclamation;* for the Lord, by this precious gift, and this great salvation, hath comforted his people.—A sacred historian hath left it upon record, that, at the first exhibition of this ravishing scene, there was with the angel who brought the blessed tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and making the concave of the skies resound with their Hallelujahs. At the dawn of the Son of Righteousness, when He was beginning to rise with healing in his wings, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.—And shall man, whom this gracious dispensation principally respects; shall man, who is the centre of all these gladdening rays; shall he have no heart to adore, no anthem to celebrate, this

Love without end, and without measure grace!—*Milt.*

How pure is the state of the sky, and how clear its aspect! Clearer than the limpid stream, purer than the transparent crystal, and more curiously fine than the polished mirror. That stately ceiling, fretted with gold, and stretched to an extent of many millions of leagues, is not disfigured with a single flaw. That azure canopy, embroidered with stars, and spacious enough to form a covering for unnumbered worlds, is without the least spot or wrinkle. Yet this, even this, will scarce yield us so much as a faint representation of the Divine Purity; God is a God of matchless and transcendent excellency. His ways are uprightness itself. His counsels and words are the very sanctity of wisdom and of truth. The laws which He has given to uni-

* Isa. xlix. 13. I have not adhered to our common translation, but endeavoured to preserve, somewhat more faithfully, the noble pathos, and inimitable energy, of the sacred original.—The love of God manifested in a divine and dying Saviour, is a blessing of such inconceivable richness, as must render all acknowledgments flat, and all encomiums languid. Yet, I think, the most poetical and most emphatical celebration of that unspeakable instance of goodness, is contained in this rapturous exclamation of the prophet; which intimates, with a wonderful majesty of sentiment, that even the whole compass of the inanimate creation, could it be sensible of the benefit, and capable of delight, would express its gratitude in all these demonstrations of the most lively and exuberant joy.

versal nature, are exquisitely contrived, and beyond all possibility of improvement. The precepts which he has appointed for the human race, are a complete summary of all that is honourable in itself, and perfective of the rational mind. Not the least oversight in planning a series of events for all futurity. Not the least mal-administration in managing the affairs of every age, since time began; and of every nation under the whole heavens.—Pardon these disparaging expressions. A negative perfection is far, far beneath thy dignity, O thou most Highest.* In all these instances, in all thy acts, and all thy attributes, thou art not only holy, but "glorious in holiness."

So inconceivably holy is the Lord God of Hosts, that he sees defilement even in the brightness of the firmament. The living sapphire of the heavens, before his majesty, loses its lustre. Yea, the stars (though the most pure and resplendent part of the heavens) are not pure in his sight. How much less man, who, in his fallen and depraved state, is but as a worm that crawls in the corrupted carcase; and the Son of Man, who,

* "O Thou most Highest."—This expression occurs more than once in the psalms used by the established church. It is, I think, one of those beauties which, because often exhibited, generally escape our notice. It is a superlative formed on a superlative; and, though not strictly conformable to grammatical rules, is nobly superior to them all.—The language seems to be sensible of its own deficiency, when the incomprehensible Jehovah is addressed or celebrated. Oppressed, as it were, with the glories of the subject, it labours after a more emphatical manner of diction than the ordinary forms of speech afford. —It is, if I rightly judge, one of those daring and happy peculiarities of a masterly genius, which Mr. Pope so finely describes; and, while he describes, exemplifies:

> Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
> And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
> From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
> And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.
>
> *Essay on Criticism.*

St. Paul's—ελαχιστοτερος παντων των αγιων—is a beautiful passage of the like nature, which our translators have very properly rendered, Less than the least of all saints.—His πολλω μαλλον χρειστερον is another instance of the same kind; but here the English version fails. Far better is extremely flaccid, compared with the nervous original. And I greatly question, whether it is possible to translate the sentence with equal conciseness and with equal spirit.—See *Eph.* iii. 8. *Phil.* i. 23.

by reason of his manifold actual impurities, is too justly compared to an insect, that wallows amidst stench and putrefaction?*—Is there not then abundant cause, for the most irreproachable and eminent of mankind to renounce all arrogant pretensions; to lay aside every assuming air, to take nothing but shame and confusion to themselves? A holy prophet, and a holy prince, felt such humbling impressions, from a glimpse of the uncreated purity. I abhor myself in dust and ashes,† was the declaration of the one; I am a man of unclean lips,‡ the confession of the other.—Should not this teach us all to adore the Divine Mercies, for that precious purifying fountain,§ which was foretold from the foundation of the world, but was opened at that awful juncture, when knotty whips tore the flesh, when ragged thorns mangled the temples; when sharpened nails cut fresh sluices for the crimson current; when the gash of the spear completed the dreadful work, and forthwith flowed there, from the wounded heart, blood and water?

* Job xxv. 5, 6. I submit it to the judgment of the learned, whether this is not the true meaning of the text.—It may not, perhaps, recommend itself to the squeamishly nice critic, or to those persons who dream of, I know not what, dignity in our fallen nature. But it seems, in preference to every other interpretation, suitable to the sacred context; and is far from being injurious to the character of that apostate race, which is "altogether become abominable," and "is as an unclean thing."—On this supposition, there is not only an apparent, but a very striking contrast, between the purity of God and the pollution of man. The purity of the most high God, which outshines the moon, and eclipses the stars, the pollution of degenerate man, which, exclusive of a Saviour, would render him as loathsome to the all-seeing eye, as the vilest vermin are in ours.—Without assigning this sense to the passage, I cannot discern the force of the antithesis, nor indeed the propriety of the sentiment. Worms, in the general, give us an idea of meanness and infirmity not of defilement and impurity; unless they are insects hatched amidst putrefaction, and considered in such noisome circumstances.—The two words of the original, רִמָּה and תּוֹלַעַת, are evidently used in this signification by Moses and Isaiah; by the former, to denote the vermin which devoured the putrefied manna; by the latter, to express the reptiles which swarm in the body that sees corruption.—*Exod.* xvi. 20. *Isa.* xiv. 11.

† Job xlii. 6. ‡ Isa. vi. 5.

§ In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness.

Zech. xiii &c.

Especially since God himself saw no blemish in his dear Son. He looketh to the moon, and it shineth not; yet his all-penetrating and jealous eye discerned nothing amiss, nothing defective, in our glorious Redeemer. Nothing amiss! He bore this most illustrious testimony concerning his holy child Jesus; "In Him I am pleased, I am well pleased: I acquiesce, with entire complacency, and with the highest delight, in his person, his undertaking, and the whole execution of his office."—How should this thought enliven our hopes, while the other mortifies our pride? Should not our hearts spring within us, and even leap for joy, at the repeated assurance given us by Revelation, that such a divinely excellent person is our Mediator? What apparent reason has every believer to adopt the blessed Virgin's exclamation: "My soul doth magnify the Lord for his transcendent mercy; and my spirit rejoices, not in wide extended harvests, waving over my fertile glebe;* not in armies vanquished, and leaving the peculiar treasure of nations for my spoil;* but in an infinitely richer, nobler blessing, even in God my Saviour:" —that a person, so sublime and perfect, has vouchsafed to become my surety; to give himself for my ransom in the world below, and act as my advocate in the royal Presence above; yea, to make my recovery the reward of his sufferings; my final felicity the honour of his mediatorial kingdom!

When an innumerable multitude† of bodies, many of them more than a hundred thousand miles in diameter,‡ are all set in motion;—when the orbits in which

** The inspired penman, from these two occasions of distinguished joy, sets forth incomparably greater delight, which arises from the gift of a Saviour, and the blessing of redemption.—*Isa.* ix. ver. 3. compared with ver. 6.

† This refers, not only to the planets which pass and repass about our sun, but also to the other planetary worlds, which are supposed to attend the several fixed stars.

‡ The diameter of Jupiter is calculated at 130,650 miles, while his orbit is reckoned to consist of 895,134,000. Which computation, according to the maxims of astronomy, and the laws of proportion, may, as is taken for granted in the Contemplations, be applied to other planets revolving round other suns.

they perform their periodical revolutions are extended at the rate of several hundreds of millions; when each has a distinct and separate sphere for finishing his vast circuit; when no one knows what it is to be cramped, but each most freely expatiates in his unbounded career; when every one is placed at such an immense remove from each other, that they appear to their respective inhabitants only as so many spots of light:—how astonishing must be the expanse, which yields room for all those mighty globes, and their widely-diffused operations! To what prodigious lengths did the Almighty Builder stretch his line, when he marked out the stupendous platform!—I wonder at such an immeasurable extent. My very thoughts are lost in this abyss of space. But, be it known to mortals, be it never forgot by sinners, that, in all its most surprising amplitude, it is small, it is scanty, compared with the bounty and the mercy of its Maker.

His bounty is absolutely without limits,* and without end. The most lavish generosity cannot exhaust, or even diminish his munificence. O! all ye tribes of men, or rather, all ye classes of intelligent creatures, ye are not straitened in the liberality of your ever-blessed Creator; be not straitened in your own expectations. "Open your mouth wide, and he shall fill it" with copious and continual draughts from the cup of joy. Your God, on whom is your whole dependence, is more than able, is more than willing, to "supply all your need according to his riches in glory."—When the Lord Jehovah is the giver, and his grace† the gift, let

* By bounty, I mean not the actual exercise, or the sensible effects, of this excellency in the Deity. These are, and always must be, through the immense perfection of the attribute, and the necessary scantiness of the recipient, bounded. But I would be understood as speaking of the divine power, and the divine will, to exert divine beneficence. These can have no real, no imaginary limits. These, after a profusion of blessings distributed to unnumbered worlds, continued through unnumbered ages, must still have more to bestow; for ever have more to bestow; infinitely more to bestow, than it is possible for creation itself to receive.

† 2 Cor. ix. 8. "God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye, having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good

your wishes be unbounded, and your cravings insatiable. All that created beings can possibly covet, is but a very small pittance of that unknown happiness which the everlasting Benefactor is ready to bestow. Suppose every charitable disposition, which warms the hearts of the human race, added to those more enlarged affections which glow in heavenly bosoms; what were they all, even in their highest exercise, compared with the benignity of the Divine Nature?—Bless me then, thou eternal Source of love; bless all that reverence thy holy name, according to thy own most profuse goodness! whose great prerogative it is to disdain all measure. O! bless us, in proportion to that grace, the richness of which (unutterable by the tongues of men and of angels) was once spoken in the groans, and written in the wounds, of thy expiring Son.

Spacious indeed are these heavens! Where do they begin? Where do they end? What is their extent? Can angels answer my question? Have angels travelled the vast circuit? Can angels measure the bounds of space? No; it is boundless, it is unknown, it is amazing all.—How charming then to reflect, that the mercy of God is "greater than the heavens;" is more extensive than the dimensions of the sky! Transporting reflection! Let me indulge thee once more!* Let me think over the delightful display of this lovely attribute; and, while I admire the trophies of forgiving

work!"—How beautiful and emphatical is this description! Inferior to nothing but that extent of ability, and those riches of liberality, which it so eloquently celebrates. Does it not exhaust all the powers of language, while it attempts to give us a specimen of the munificence of the Lord?

* Once more refer to p. 71 of Reflections on a Flower-Garden.—The following pages, to the 99th, exhibit a digressive view of the divine mercy. I thought it proper to apprize myreader of this excursion, though I hope it will be needless to offer an apology for enlarging upon a theme incomparably joyous. Who can complain of tediousness, while I speak consolation to distressed, and recovery to ruined creatures? The divine mercy is the sole fountain of all our present and future blessings. In conformity to this benign attribute, human hopes arise, and human felicity flows. Who, therefore, can be weary of viewing and reviewing, when the lengths and breadths of forgiving grace are the ravishing prospect?

goodness, add one to the number. With what amiable and affecting colours is this represented in the parable of the prodigal! What could induce that foolish youth to forsake his father's house? Had he not been tenderly cherished by the good parent, and loaded with benefits from his indulgent hand? Were not the restraints of parental government an easy yoke? or rather, a preservative from ruin? Notwithstanding every endearing obligation, he revolts from his duty, and launches into such scandalous irregularities, as were dishonourable to his family and destructive to himself.—When necessity, not choice, but sharp necessity, drove him to a submissive return, does the injured father stand aloof, or shut his doors? Quite the reverse. He espies him, while he is yet a great way off; and the moment he beholds the profligate youth, he has compassion on him. His bowels yearn, they "sound like an harp" touched with notes divinely soft. He never once thinks of his ungracious departure and infamous debaucheries. Pity, parental pity, passes an act of oblivion, and in one instant cancels a series of long-continued provocations.—So strong are the workings of fatherly affection, that he is almost impatient to embrace the naked and destitute wretch. The son's pace is slow, He arose and came; the father's is swift, he sprung forth (aged as he was) and ran. And is there a single frown in his brow, or one upbraiding word on his tongue?—Instead of loathing the sordid creature, or reproaching him for his odious excesses, he falls on his neck, clasps him in his arms, and hugs him to his bosom. Instead of disowning the riotous spendthrift, or rejecting him for his undutiful behaviour, he receives and welcomes him with kisses of delight. He rejoices at his return from extravagance and vice, as he formerly rejoiced on the day of his nativity.—When this companion of harlots opens his mouth, before he speaks, the father hears. He interrupts him in the midst of his intended speech. The overflowings of his compassionate heart can brook no delay. He seems to be uneasy himself, till he has

made the afflicted penitent glad with the assurance of his acceptance, and the choicest of his favours. While the poor abashed offender seeks nothing more than not to be abhorred, he is thoroughly reconciled, and honoured before the whole family. While he requests no other indulgence, than only to be treated as the meanest servant, he is clothed with the best robe; he is feasted with the fatted calf; he is caressed as the dearest of children.—Was there ever so bright and winning a picture of the tenderest mercy, most freely vouchsafed, even to the most unworthy of creatures? Yet thus, my soul, and thus, my fellow-sinner, will the Lord God of everlasting compassions receive us, if, sensible of our misery, and thirsting for salvation, we turn to him through Jesus Christ.

Where sin has abounded, says the proclamation from the court of heaven, grace doth much more abound. Manasseh was a monster of barbarity; for he caused his own children to pass through the fire, and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Manasseh was an adept in iniquity; for he not only multiplied, and to an extravagant degree, his own sacrilegious impieties; but he poisoned the principles, and perverted the manners of his subjects, making them to do worse than the most detestable of the heathen idolaters.* Yet, through this superabundant grace, he is humbled, he is reformed, and becomes a child of forgiving love, an heir of immortal glory.—Behold that bitter and bloody persecutor Saul,—when breathing out threatenings,† and

* See 2 Chron. xxxiii.

† Acts ix. 1. Σαυλος ὁ ἐμπνεων απειλης και φονου, "Saul yet breathing out threatening and slaughter."—What a representation is here of a mind mad with rage, and abandoned to the fiercest extremes of barbarity! I scarce know, whether I am more shocked at the persecutor's savage disposition, or charmed with the evangelist's lively description: the adverb ἐτι seems referable to chap. viii. ver. 2, and has, in this connexion, a peculiar force. The havoc he had committed, the inoffensive families he had already ruined, were not sufficient to assuage his vengeful spirit. They were only a taste; which, instead of glutting the blood-hound, made him more closely pursue the track, and more eagerly pant for destruction. He is still athirst for violence and murder. So eager and insatiable is his thirst, that he even breathes

bent upon slaughter, he worried the lambs, and put to death the disciples of Jesus. Who, upon the principles of human judgment, would not have pronounced him a vessel of wrath, destined to unavoidable damnation? nay, would not have been ready to conclude, that, if there were heavier chains, and a deeper dungeon in the world of wo, they must surely be reserved for such an implacable enemy of true godliness? Yet (admire and adore the inexhaustible treasures of grace!) this Saul is admitted into the goodly fellowship of the prophets, is numbered with the noble army of martyrs, and makes a distinguished figure among the glorious company of the apostles. The Corinthians were flagitious even to a proverb. Some of them wallowed in such abominable vices, and habituated themselves to such outrageous acts of injustice, as were a reproach to human nature: yet, even these sons of violence, and slaves of sensuality, "were washed, were sanctified, were justified."* Washed in the precious blood of a dying Redeemer; sanctified by the powerful operations of the blessed Spirit; justified through the infinitely tender mercies of a gracious God. Those who were once the burden of the earth, are now the joy of heaven, and the delight of angels.

There is another instance in Scripture, which most loudly publishes that sweetest of the divine names, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.† An instance this, which exceeds all the former, which exceeds whatever can be imagined; which, if I was to forget, the very stones might cry out, and sound it in my ears. I mean the case of those

out threatening and slaughter. His words are spears and arrows, and his tongue a sharp sword. It is as natural for him to menace the Christians, as to breathe the air.—Nay, they bleed every hour, every moment, in the purposes of his rancorous heart. It is only owing to want of power, that every syllable he utters, every breath he draws, does not deal about deaths, and cause some of the innocent disciples to fall.

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. † Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

sinners who murdered the Prince of Peace, and Lord of Glory. These men could scarce have the shadow of an excuse for their crime, hardly a circumstance to extenuate their guilt. They were well acquainted with his exemplary conversation; they had often heard his heavenly doctrines; they were almost daily spectators of his unequalled miracles. They therefore had all possible reason to honour him, as the most illustrious of Beings, and to receive his gospel as the most inestimable of blessings. Yet, notwithstanding all these engaging motives to love him, even above their own lives, they seize his person; asperse his character; drag him before a heathen tribunal, and extort a sentence of death against innocence and holiness itself. Never was the vilest slave so contumeliously abused, nor the most execrable malefactor so barbarously executed. The sun was confounded at the shocking scene, and one cannot but wonder, how the avenging lightnings could withhold their flashes. The earth trembled at the horrid deed; and why, why did it not cleave asunder, and open a passage for such blood-thirsty miscreants into the nethermost hell? Shall these ever hope to obtain forgiveness from the righteous Judge? Shall not these be consigned over to inexorable wrath, and the severest torments? O the miraculous effects of divine grace! O the triumphant goodness of God our Saviour! Many, even of these impious wretches, at the descent of the Holy Ghost, were convinced of their miserable state; were wounded with penitential remorse; fled to the sanctuary of the cross; had their pardon ratified by the baptismal seal; and, continuing in the apostle's doctrine, were made partakers of the kingdom of heaven: where they now shine, as so many everlasting monuments of most distinguished mercy, and receive beatitude, past utterance, from that very Redeemer, whom once "with wicked hands they crucified and slew."

Well might the prophet cry out, with a pleasing amazement, "Who is a God like unto thee, that par-

doneth iniquity, and passeth by trasgression."*—Let all flesh know assuredly, let all flesh rejoice greatly, That with the Lord there is such mercy, and with his Christ such plentiful redemption. And O! for the voice of an archangel, to circulate the glad tidings through the universe: that the American savage, as well as the European sage, may learn the exceeding riches of grace in Christ; through whose infinitely satisfying propitiation all manner of sin barbarity, and blasphemy, are freely forgiven unto men.

What a grand and majestic dome is the sky! Where are the pillars which support the stately concave? What art, most exactly true, balances the pressure? What props of insuperable strength sustain the weight? How is that immeasurable arch upheld, unshaken and unimpaired; while so many generations of busy mortals have sunk and disappeared, as bubbles upon the stream?—If those stars are of such an amazing bulk, how are they also fastened in their lofty situation? By what miracle in mechanics, are so many thousands of ponderous orbs kept from falling upon our heads; kept from dashing both the world to pieces, and its inhabitants to death? Are they hung in golden or adamantine chains? Rest they their enormous load on rocks of marble, or columns of brass?—No; they are pendulous in fluid æther; yet are more immovably fixed, than if the everlasting mountains lent their forests for an axle-tree, or their ridges for a basis. The Almighty Architect stretches out the north, and its whole starry train over the empty place. He hangs the earth, and all the ethereal globes, upon nothing.† Yet are their foundations laid so sure, that they can "never be moved at any time."

No unfit representation to the sincere Christian, of his final perseverance;‡ such as points out the cause

* Mic. vii. 18. † Job xxvi. 7.

‡ With regard to the final perseverance of the true believer, I am sensible this point is not a little controverted.—The sentiments which

which effects it, and constitutes the pledge which ascertains it. His nature is all enfeebled. He is not able of himself to think a good thought. He has no visible safeguard, nor any sufficiency of his own. And yet whole legions of formidable enemies are in a confederacy to compass his ruin. The world lays unnumbered snares for his feet; the devil is incessantly urging the siege, by a multitude of fiery darts, or wily temp-

follow, are my steadfast belief. It is by no means proper, in a work of this nature, to enter upon a discussion of the subject: neither have I room so much as to hint what might be urged for its support. Let my reader observe, that I am far from delivering it as essential to Christianity, or necessary to salvation. Millions of the very contrary conviction are, I doubt not, high in the favour of God; and in a growing meetness for his heavenly kingdom. As I blame none for rejecting, none, I hope, will be offended with me for espousing this particular doctrine. To be of different opinions, at least in some inferior instances, seems an unavoidable consequence of our present state; where ignorance, in part, cleaves to the wisest minds, and prejudice easily besets the most impartial judgments. This may turn to our common advantage, and afford room for the display and exercise of those healing virtues, moderation, meekness, and forbearance.—Let me only be permitted to ask, whether this tenet does not evidently tend to establish the comfort of the Christian, and to magnify the fidelity of God our Saviour? Whether, far from countenancing sloth, or encouraging remissness, to know that our labour shall not be in vain, is not the most prevailing inducement to abound in the work of the Lord. 1 *Cor.* xv. 58.

Is any one inclined to examine the reasons which made the author a proselyte to this persuasion? he may find them displayed in the memorial delivered by several select and eminent divines of the church of England, at the renowned synod of Dordt. (See *Acta. Synod Dordrech.* part ii. page 246 of the Latin edition, published in a single quarto volume.) Those who have no opportunity of consulting the memoirs of that venerable assembly, I would refer to the works of the indefatigable and very learned Turretin, or to those of the candid and elegant Witsius.—*Turret.* tom. ii. Q. xvi. *Wits. Oecon.* lib. iii. chap. xiii.

The latest and fullest view of the point, which I ever remember to have met with in any of our English writers, is in the Lime-street Lectures; which are a defence of several most important doctrines of the gospel, and contained in two octavo volumes, the united labours of nine modern divines; most of whom are well known to the world by their other evangelical and useful writings. In those lectures, the final perseverance of the saints is very particularly stated; and, to my apprehension at least, most satisfactorily proved. The arguments usually urged against it are impartially considered; and I cannot but think (with all due deference to the judgment of others) unanswerably confuted.

And here (not to swell this note any farther) I shall only just hint, that the judicious Hooker (an authority, perhaps, as weighty and unexceptionable as any that can well be produced) gives a solemn attestation to this tenet, in a short discourse on the Perpetuity of Faith, subjoined to his Ecclesiastical Polity. Folio edition.

tations: the flesh, like a perfidious inmate, under colour of friendship, and a specious pretence of pleasure, is always forward to betray his integrity. But, amidst all these threatening circumstances of personal weakness, and imminent danger, an invisible aid is his defence. "I will uphold thee," says the blessed God, "with the right hand of my righteousness."* Comfortable truth! The arm, which fixes the stars in their orders, and guides the planets in their course, is stretched out to preserve the heirs of salvation. "My sheep," adds the great Redeemer, "are mine; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."† What words are these! And did they come from Him who hath all power in heaven and on earth? And were they spoke to the weakest of the flock, to every unfeigned follower of the great Shepherd? Then, Omnipotence itself must be vanquished, before they can be destroyed, either by the seductions of fraud, or the assaults of violence.

If you ask, therefore, what security we have of enduring to the end, and continuing faithful unto death? The very same that establishes the heavens, and settles the ordinances of the universe. Can these be thrown into confusion?‡ Then may the true believer draw back unto perdition. Can the sun be dislodged from his sphere, and rush lawlessly through the sky? Then, and then only, can the faith of God's elect‖ be finally overthrown. Be of good courage then, my soul, rely on those divine succours, which are so solemnly stipulated, so faithfully promised. Though thy grace be languid as the glimmering spark; though the overflowings of corruption threaten it with total extinction, yet, since the great Jehovah has undertaken to cherish the dim principle, "many waters cannot quench it, nor all floods drown it." Nay, though it were feeble as the smoking flax,§ goodness and faith-

* Isai. xli. 10. † John x. 28. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 35, 36. ‖ Tit. i. 2.

§ The tenderness and faithfulness of God to his people, are finely pictured by the prophet Isaiah, chap. xliii. ver. 3.; which passage,

fulness stand engaged to augment the heat, to raise the fire, and feed the flame, till it beam forth a lamp of immortal glory, in the heavens.

As to the faithfulness of a covenanting God, this may be emblematically seen in the stability of the heavenly bodies, and the perpetuity of their motions.* Those that are fixed or stationary, continue unalterable in their grand elevations. No injurious shocks, no violence of conflicting elements, are able to displace those everlasting hinges, on which dependent worlds revolve. Through the whole flight of time, they recede not, so much as a hair's breadth, from the precise central point of their respective systems,—while the erratick, or planetary, perform their prodigious stages, without any intermission, or the least embarrassment. How soon, and how easily, is the most finished piece of human machinery disconcerted! But all the celestial movements are so nicely adjusted, all their operations so critically proportioned, and their mutual dependencies so strongly connected, that they prolong their beneficial courses throughout all ages. While mighty cities are overwhelmed with ruin, and their very names lost in oblivion; while vast empires are swept from their foundations, and leave not so much

because of its rich consolation and uncommon beauty, is deservedly adopted by St. Matthew, and ingrafted into the system of evangelical truths. He will not himself break, nor suffer to be broken by any other, the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Was it possible to have chosen two more delicate and expressive representations?—Could any image be more significant of a very infirm and enfeebled faith, than the flexile reed, that bends before every wind? which, besides its natural weakness, is made abundantly weaker by being bruised, and so is ready to fall in pieces of itself.—Or could any thing, with a more pathetical exactness, describe the extreme imbecility of that other principle of the divine life, love? The state of the flax, just beginning to burn, is liable to be put out by the least blast: more liable still is the wick of the lamp, when it is not so much as kindled into a glimmering flame, but only breathing smoke, and uncertain whether it shall take fire or no. Yet true faith, and heavenly love, though subsisting amidst such pitiable infirmities, will not be abandoned by their great author; shall not be extinguished by any temptations; but be maintained, invigorated, and made finally triumphant.—*Matt.* xii. 20.

* Psal. cxix. 89, 90.

as a shadowy trace of their ancient magnificence; while all terrestrial things are subject to vicissitude, and fluctuating in uncertainty; these are permanent in their duration; these are invariable in their functions: "not one faileth." Who doubts the constant succession of day and night, or the regular returns of summer and winter? And why, O! why shall we doubt the veracity of God, or distrust the accomplishment of his holy word? Can the ordinances of heaven depart? Then only can God forget to be gracious, or neglect the performance of his promise. Nay, our Lord gives us yet firmer ground of affiance. He affords us a surer bottom for our faith, than the fundamental laws of the universe. Heaven and earth, he says, shall pass away, but my words shall not, in a single instance, or in one tittle of their import, pass away. No; his sacred word, whatever may obstruct it, whoever may oppose it, shall be fulfilled to the very uttermost.

O powerful word! How astonishing is its efficacy! When this word was issued forth, a thousand worlds emerged out of nothing. Should the mighty orders be repeated, a thousand more would spring into existence. By this word, the vast system of created things is upheld, in constant and immutable perfection. Should it give command, or cease to exert its energy, the universal frame would be dissolved, and all nature revert to her original chaos. And this very word is pledged for the safety, the comfort, the happiness of the godly. This inviolable, this almighty word, speaks in all the promises of the gospel. How strangely infatuated are our souls, that we should value it so little? What infidels are we, in fact, that we should depend upon it no more? Did it create whatever has a being, and shall it not work faith in our breasts? Do unnumbered worlds owe their support to this word? and shall it not be sufficient to buoy up our souls in troubles, or establish them in trials? Is it the life of the universe, and shall it be a dead letter to mankind?

If I wish to be heard, when I implore heavenly

blessings; is not this privilege most clearly made over to my enjoyment, in that well-known text, "Ask, and it shall be given you?"*—If I long for the eternal Comforter, to dwell in my heart, and sanctify my nature; have I not an apparent title to this high prerogative, conferred in that sweet assertive interrogation, "How much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him?"†—If I earnestly covet the inestimable treasures that are comprised in the great Immanuel's mediation, can I have a firmer claim to the noble portion, than is granted in that most precious scripture, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out?‡"—What assurance of being interested in these unspeakable mercies would I desire? What form of conveyance, what deed of settlement, were it left to my own option, should I choose? Here is the word of a King, the King immortal and invisible; all whose declarations§ are truth itself.—If a monarch bestow immunities on a body of men, and confirm them by an authentic charter, no one controverts, no one questions, their right to the royal favours. And why should we suspect the validity of those glorious grants, which are made by the everlasting Sovereign of nature; which he has also ratified by an oath, and sealed with the blood of his Son?—Corporations may be disfranchised, and charters revoked: even mountains may be removed, and stars drop from their spheres; but a tenure founded on the divine promise, is unalienably secure, is lasting as eternity itself.

We have endeavoured to spell a syllable of the eternal name, in the ancient manuscript of the sky; we have catched a glimpse of the Almighty's glory, from the lustre of innumerable stars; but, would we behold all his excellencies pourtrayed in full perfection, and drawn to the very life, let us attentively consider the Redeemer.

* Matt. vii. 7. † Luke xi. 13. ‡ John vi. 37.

§ ——————If these fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness.
And earth's base built on stubble.—*Milt. Comus.*

I observe there are some parts of the firmament in which the stars seem, as it were, to cluster. They are sown thicker, they lie closer, than usual; and strike the eye with redoubled splendour. Like the jewels on a crown, they mingle their beams, and reflect an increase of brilliancy on each other.—Is there not such an assemblage, such a constellation of the divine honours, most amiably effulgent in the blessed Jesus?

Does not infinite wisdom† shine with surpassing brightness in Christ? To the making of a world there was no obstacle; but to the saving of man, there seemed to be unsurmountable bars. If the rebel is suffered to escape, where is the inflexible justice which denounces "death as the wages of sin?" If the offender is thoroughly pardoned, where is the inviolable veracity, which has solemnly declared, "the soul that sinneth shall die?" These awful attributes are set in terrible array; and, like an impenetrable battalion, oppose the salvation of apostate mankind. Who can suggest a method to absolve the traitorous race, yet vindicate the honours of almighty Sovereignty? This is an intricacy which the most exalted of finite intelligences are unable to clear. But, behold the unsearchable secret revealed! revealed in the wonderful redemption, accomplished by a dying Saviour! So plainly revealed, that "he who runs may read;" and even babes understand what minds of the deepest penetration could not contrive. The Son of God, taking our nature, obeys the law, and undergoes death in our stead. By this means, the threatened curse is executed in all its rigour, and free grace is exercised in all its riches. Justice maintains her rights, and, with a steady hand, administers impartial vengeance; while mercy dispenses her pardons, and welcomes the repentant criminal into the tenderest embraces. Hereby the seemingly thwarting attributes are reconciled. The sinner is saved, not only in full consistence with the

* See the next note.

honour of the supreme perfections, but to the most illustrious manifestation of them all.

Where does the divine power* so signally exert itself, as in the cross of Christ, and in the conquests of grace? Our Lord, in his lowest state of humiliation, gained a more glorious victory, than when, through the dividing sea, and the waste howling wilderness, "he rode upon his chariots and horses of salvation." When his hands were rivetted with irons to the bloody tree, he disarmed death of its sting, and plucked the prey from the jaws of hell. Then, even then, while he was crucified in weakness, He vanquished the strong man, and subdued our most formidable enemies. Even then he spoiled principalities, triumphed over the powers of darkness, and led captivity captive.—Now he is exalted to his heavenly throne, with what a prevailing efficacy does his grace go forth, "conquering, and to conquer!"—By this, the slaves of sin are rescued from bondage, and restored to the liberty of righteousness. By this, depraved wretches, whose appetites were sensual, and their dispositions devilish, are not only renewed, but renewed after the image of God, and made partakers of a divine nature. Millions, millions of lost creatures, are snatched, by the interposition of grace, like brands from the burning; and, translated into everlasting mansions, shine brighter than the stars, shine bright as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

Would you then see an incomparably more bright display of the divine excellence, than the unspotted firmament, the spangles of heaven, or the golden fountain of day exhibit? Contemplate Jesus of Nazareth. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. In his immaculate nature,

* Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. 1 *Cor.* i. 24.—To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church (by the amazing contrivance and accomplishment of its redemption) the deep, extensive, and (πολυποικιλος) greatly diversified wisdom of God.—*Eph.* iii. 10.

in his heavenly tempers, in his most holy life, the moral perfections of the Deity are represented to the highest advantage.*—Hark! how mercy, with her charming voice, speaks in all he utters.—See! how benevolence pours her choicest stores in all he does. Did ever compassion look so amiably soft, as in those pitying tears which swelled his eyes, and trickled down his cheeks, to bedew the rancour of his inveterate enemies? Was it possible for patience to assume a form so lovely, as that sweetly-winning conduct, which bore the contradiction of sinners? which entreated the obstinate to be reconciled? besought the guilty not to die?—In other things, we may find some scattered rays of Jehovah's glory; but in Christ they are all collected and united. In Christ, they beam forth with the strongest radiance, with the most delightful effulgence. Out of Sion, and in Sion's great Redeemer, hath God appeared in perfect beauty.

Search then, my soul, above all other pursuits, search the records of redeeming love. Let these be the principal objects of thy study.—Here employ thyself with the most unwearied assiduity.—In these are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.† Such wisdom as charms and astonishes the very angels, engages their closest attention, and fills them with the deepest adoration:‡ such knowledge, as qualifies the possessor, if

* In this sense, that saying of our Lord is eminently true: He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.—*John* xiv. 9.

† Coloss. ii. 3.—Not a mean degree, but a treasure: not one treasure, but many; not many only, but all treasures, of true wisdom and saving knowledge, are in Christ and his glorious gospel.—The transcendent excellency of those treasures seems to be finely intimated, in that other expression αποκρυφοι, hid; (which may be interpreted by the hebrew מטמונים, Job. iii. 21.) laid up with the utmost care, and the greatest safety. Not left at all adventures, to be stumbled upon by every giddy wanderer, or to fall into the arms of the yawning sluggard; but, like jewels of the brighest lustre, or riches of the highest value, kept in store to adorn and reward the diligent searcher.

‡ This, I believe, is the import of the apostles language, though it is not a literal translation of εις α επιθυμουσιν αγγελοι παρακυψαι. 1 Pet. i. 12.—I never had such a lively apprehension of the beautiful significancy of the last word, as when I have attended a dissection of some part of the animal body. In order to discern the minutiæ of the admirable frame, the latent wonders of art and mechanism, the eye is so

not for offices of dignity on earth, yet for the most honourable advancements in the kingdom of heaven. Disunited from which knowledge, all application is but elaborate impertinence; and all science, no better than pompous ignorance. These records contain the faultless model of duty, and the noblest motives to obedience.—Nothing so powerful to work a lively faith, and a joyful hope, as an attentive consideration of our Lord's unutterable merits. Nothing so sovereign to antidote the pestilential influence of the world, and deliver our affections from a slavery to ignoble objects, as an habitual remembrance of his extreme agonies. The genuine, the ever-fruitful source of all morality, is the unfeigned love of Christ; and the cross, the cross is the appointed* altar, from which we may fetch a coal,† to enkindle this sacred fire.

Behold, therefore, the Man, the matchless and stupendous Man, whose practice was a pattern of the most exalted virtue, and his person the mirror of every divine perfection. Examine the memoirs of his heavenly temper, and exemplary conversation. Contemplate that choir of graces which were associated in his mind, and shed the highest lustre on all his actions. Familiarize to thy thoughts his instructive discourses, and enter into the very spirit of his refined doctrines; that the graces may be transfused into thy breast, and the doctrines transcribed in thy life.—Follow him to Calvary's horrid eminence; to Calvary's fatal catas-

sharpened, and its application so intensely bended, as gives a very just experimental comment on that expressive phrase, παρακυψαι: with such earnest attention is the everlasting gospel contemplated by the angelic orders! How much more, if it were possible, does it deserve the devout and incessant consideration of human minds? since by them it is not only to be speculated as a bright and ravishing display of the divine attributes, but to be applied to their fallen nature, as a most benign scheme of recovering grace; as the sure and only method of obtaining life and immortality.

* And I, says our Lord, if I be lifted up from the earth, and extended on the cross, will draw all men unto me: will give such a rich and transcendent display of my love, as shall constitute the most powerful and prevailing attractive of theirs.—John xii. 32.

† Alluding to Isaiah vi. 6.

phe—where innocence, dignity, and merit, were made perfect through sufferings; each shining with all possible splendour through the tragical scene; somewhat like his own radiant bow, then glowing with the greatest beauty, when appearing on the darkest cloud.—Be thy most constant attention fixed on that lovely and sorrowful spectacle. Behold the spotless victim nailed to the tree, and stabbed to the heart. Hear him pouring out prayers for his murderers, before he poured out his soul for transgressors. See the wounds that stream with forgiveness, and bleed balm for a distempered world. O! see the justice of the Almighty and his goodness; his mercy and his vengeance; every tremendous and gracious attribute manifested; manifested with inexpressible glory, in that most ignominious, yet grandest of transactions.

Since God is so inconceivably great, as these his marvellous works declare;

> Since the great Sov'reign sends ten thousand worlds,
> To tell us He resides above them all,
> In glory's unapproachable recess;*

how can we forbear hastening, with Moses, bowing ourselves to the earth, and worshipping?

O! what an honourable, as well as advantageous employ, is prayer!—Advantageous—By prayer, we cultivate that improving correspondence with Jehovah; we carry on that gladdening intercourse with his Spirit, which must begin here, in order to be completed in eternity.—Honourable—By prayer, we have access to that mighty Potentate; whose sceptre sways uni-

* For this quotation, and several valuable hints, I acknowledge myself indebted to those beautiful and sublime poems, entitled Night-Thoughts.—Of which I shall only say, that I receive fresh pleasure, and richer improvment, from every renewed perusal. And, I think, I shall have reason to bless the indulgent Bestower of all wisdom, for those instructive and animating compositions, even in my last moments. Than which, nothing can more emphatically speak their superior excellence, nor give a more solid satisfaction to their worthy author.—Happy should I think myself, if these little sketches of contemplative devotion might be honoured with the most inferior degree of the same success;—might receive a testimony, not from the voice of fame, but from the dying lips of some edified Christian.

versal nature, and whose rich regalia fills the skies with lustre.—Prayer places us in his presence-chamber; while "the blood of sprinkling" procures us a gracious audience.

Shall I then blush to be found prostrate before the throne of grace? Shall I be ashamed to have it known, that I offer up social supplications in the family, or am conscientious in observing my private retirements? Rather, let me glory in this unspeakable privilege. Let me reckon it the noblest posture, to fall low on my knees before his footstool; and the highest honour to enjoy communion with his most exalted majesty.—Incomparably more noble, than to sit, in person, on the triumphal chariot; or to stand in effigy amidst the temple of worthies.

Most inestimable, in such a view, is that promise, which so often occurs in the prophetic writings, and is the crowning benefit of the new covenant, I will be thy God.*—Will this supremely excellent, and almighty Being, vouchsafe to be my portion? To settle upon a poor sinner, not the heritage of a country, not the possession of the whole earth; but his own ever-blessed self? May I then, through his free condescending grace, and the unknown merits of his Son, look upon all these infinitely noble attributes as my treasure? May I regard the wisdom, which superintends such a multitude of worlds, as my guide; the power which produced, and preserves them in existence, as my guard; the goodness which, by an endless communication of favours, renders them all so many habitations of happiness, as "my exceeding great reward?" What a fund of felicity is included in such a blessing! How often does the Israelitish prince exult in the assurance, that this unutterable and boundless good is his own? Interested in this, he bids defiance to every evil that can be dreaded, and rests in certain expectation of every blessing that can be desired. The Lord is my

* Heb. viii. 10.

light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord, with an air of exultation, he repeats both his affiance and his challenge, is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?* Nothing so effectual, as this appropriating faith, to inspire a dignity of mind superior to transitory trifles, or to create a calmness of temper, unalarmed by vulgar fears, unappalled by death itself.—The Lord is my shepherd, says the same truly gallant and heroic personage; therefore shall I lack nothing.† How is it possible he should suffer want, who has the all-sufficient fulness for his supply? So long as unerring wisdom is capable of contriving the means, so long as uncontrollable power is able to execute them, such a one cannot fail of being safe and happy, whether he continue amidst the vicissitudes of time, or depart into the unchangeable eternity.

Here let us stand a moment, and humbly contemplate this great God, together with ourselves, in a relative view.—If we reflect on the works of material nature, their number incomprehensible, and their extent unmeasurable; each of them apart so admirably framed, the connexions of the whole so exquisitely regulated, and all derived from one and the same glorious agent; —if we recollect the far more noble accomplishments of elegant taste, and discerning judgment, of refined affections and exalted sentiments, which are to be found among the several orders of intelligent existence; and all of them flowing, in rich emanations, from the one sole fountain of intellectual light;—if we farther consider this author of material beauty and moral excellency, as a Guardian, a Governor, and Benefactor to all his creatures, supporting the whole system, and protecting each individual by an ever-watchful Providence; presiding over the minutest affairs, and causing all events to terminate in the most extensive good; heaping, with unremitted liberality, his benefits upon every capable object, and making the circuit of the

* Psal. xxvii. 1. † Psal. xxiii. 1.

universe a seminary of happiness:—is it possible for the human heart, under such captivating views, to be indifferent towards this most benign, most bountiful original of being and of bliss? Can any be so immersed in stupidity, as to say unto the Almighty, in the language of an irreligious temper, and licentious life,—to say, "Depart from us; we implore not thy favour, nor desire the knowledge of thy ways?" Wonder, O heavens! be amazed, O earth! and let the inhabitants of both express their astonishment, at this unparalleled complication of disengenuous, ungrateful, destructive perverseness!

If we consider our fallen and imperfect state; frail in our bodies, enfeebled in our minds; in every part of our constitution, and in all the occurences of life, "like a tottering wall, or a broken hedge:" if we survey our indigent and infirm state; without holiness, without spiritual strength; our possession of present conveniencies entirely dependent on God's sovereign pleasure; yea, forfeited, justly forfeited, with every future hope, by a thousand aggravated iniquities;—if we add the various disasters of our condition, agitated as we are by tumultuous passions; oppressed with dispiriting fears; held in suspense by a variety of perplexing* cares; liable to pains, and exposed to troubles; troubles from every quarter, troubles of every kind;—can we, amidst so many wants, under such deplorable

* Perplexing.—Those who read the original language of the New Testament, are sufficiently apprized, that such is the significancy of that benovolent dissuasive, urged by our Lord, μη μεριμνατε, Mat. xi. 25. I beg leave, for the sake of the unlearned reader, to observe, that our translation, though for the most part faithful and excellent, has here misrepresented our divine Master's meaning. Take no thought for your food, for your raiment, for your bodily welfare, is not only not the true sense, but the very reverse of the scriptural doctrine. We are required to take a prudent and moderate thought for the necessaries of life. The sluggard, who neglects this decent precaution, is severely reprimanded; is sent to one of the meanest animals, to blush for his folly, and learn discretion from her conduct. *Prov.* vi. 6.—Our Saviour's precept, and the exact sense of his expression is, take no anxious thought: indulge no perplexing care. No such care as may argue an unreasonable distrust of Providence, or may rend and tear your minds with distressing, with pernicious solicitude.

infirmities, and subject to such disastrous accidents;—can we be unconcerned whether God's omnipotent, irresistible, all-conducting hand be against us, or for us? Imagination itself shudders at the thought!—Can we rest satisfied without a well-grounded persuasion, that we are reconciled to this supreme Lord, and the objects of his unchangeable goodness?—If there be an abandoned wretch, whose apprehensions are so fatally blinded, who is so utterly lost to all sense of his duty, and of his interest; let me bewail his misery, while I abhor his impiety; bewail his misery, though popularity, with her choicest laurels, adorn his brow; though affluence, with her richest delicacies, load his table; though half a nation, or half a world, conspire to call him happy.

May I, by a believing application, solace myself in this everlasting source of love, perfection, and joy! Grant me this request, and I ask no more.—Only that I may expect, not with a reluctant anxiety, but with a ready cheerfulness, the arrival of that important hour, when this veil of flesh shall drop, and the shadows of mortality flee away; when I shall no longer complain of obscure knowledge, languid affections, and imperfect fruition; but shall see the uncreated and immortal majesty: see him not in this distant and unaffecting method of reasoning from his works, but with the most clear and direct intuition of the mind: when I shall love him, not with a cold and contracted spirit, but with the most lively and enlarged emotions of gratitude: when I shall incessantly enjoy the light of his countenance, and be united, inseparably united, to his all-glorious Godhead.—Take, ye ambitious, unenvied, and unopposed, take to yourselves the toys of state. May I be enabled to rejoice in this blessed hope, and to triumph in that amiable, that adorable, that delightful name, the Lord my God! And I shall scarce bestow a thought on the splendid pageantry of the world, unless it be to despise its empty pomp, and to pity its deluded admirers.

All these bodies, though immense in their size, and almost infinite in their multitude, are obedient to the divine command. The God of Wisdom "telleth their numbers," and is intimately acquainted with their various properties. The God of Power "calleth them all by their names," and assigns them whatsoever office he pleases. He marshals all the starry legions, with infinitely greater ease, and nicer order, than the most expert general arranges his disciplined troops. He appoints their posts, he marks their route, he fixes the time for their return. The posts which he appoints, they occupy, without fail. In the route which he settles, they persevere, without the least deviation. And to the instant,* which he fixes for their return, they are precisely punctual. He has given them a law, which, through a long revolution of ages, shall not be broken, unless his sovereign will interposes for its repeal. Then, indeed, the motion of the celestial orbs is controlled; their action remains suspended, or their influence receives a new direction. The sun, at his creation, issued forth with a command to travel perpetually through the heavens: since which, he has never neglected to perform the great circuit; "rejoicing as a giant to run his race." But, when it is requisite to accomplish the purposes of divine love, the orders are countermanded; the flaming courier remits his career, stands still in Gibeon;† and, for the conveniency of the chosen people, holds back the fallen day. The moon was dispatched with a charge, never to intermit her revolving course, till day and night come to an end. But, when the children of Providence are to

* The planets, and all the innumerable host of heavenly bodies, perform their courses and revolutions with so much certainty and exactness, as never once to fail; but, for almost 6000 years, come constantly about to the same period, in the hundredth part of a minute.—*Stackhouse's Hist. of the Bible.*

† This is spoken in conformity to the scripture language, and according to the common notion. With respect to the power which effected the alteration, it is much the same thing, and alike miraculous, whether the sun or the earth be supposed to move.

be favoured with an uncommon continuance of light, she halts in her march, makes a solemn pause in the valley of Ajalon;* and delays to bring on her attendant train of shadows. When the enemies of the Lord are to be discomfited, the stars are levied into the service; the stars are armed, and take the field; the stars, in their courses, fought against Sisera.†

So dutiful is material nature! so obsequious, in all her forms, to her Creator's pleasure!—The bellowing thunders listen to his voice, and the vollied lightnings observe the direction of his eye. The flying storm, and impetuous whirlwind, wear his yoke. The raging waves revere his nod; they shake the earth; they dash the skies; yet never offer to pass the limits which he has prescribed.—Even the planetary spheres, though vastly larger than this wide extended earth, are, in his hand, as clay in the hand of a potter. Though swifter than the northern blast, they sweep the long tracts of æther, yet are they guided by his reins, and execute whatever he enjoins. All those enormous globes of central fire which beam through the boundless azure, in comparison of which, an army of planets were like

* Josh. x. 12, 13.—The prophet Habakkuk, according to his lofty manner, celebrates this event; and points out, in a very poetical diction, the design of so surprising a miracle:—"The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: in the light;" the long-continued and miraculous light, "thy arrows," edged with destruction, "walked" on their awful errand; "in the clear shining" of the day, protracted for this very purpose, "thy glittering spear," launched by thy people, but guided by thy hand, sprung to its prey.—*Hab.* iii. 11.

† Judg. v. 20. The scriptural phrase "fought against," will, I hope, be a proper warrant for every expression I have used on this occasion. The passage is generally supposed to signify, that some very dreadful meteors (which the stars were thought to influence) such as fierce flashes of lightning, impetuous showers of rain, and rapid storms of hail, were employed by the Almighty to terrify, annoy, and overthrow the enemies of Israel. If so, there cannot be a more clear and lively paraphrase on the text, than those fine lines of a Jewish writer: "His severe wrath shall he sharpen for a sword, and the world shall fight with him against the ungodly. Then shall the right-aiming thunderbolts go abroad; and from the clouds, as from a well-drawn bow, shall they fly to the mark. And hail-stones, full of wrath, shall be cast out of a stone-bow; and the water of the sea shall rage against them, and the floods (as was the case of the river Kishon) shall cruelly drown them. Yea, a mighty wind shall stand up against them; and, like a storm, shall blow them away."—*Wisd.* v. 20, 21, 22, 23.

a swarm of summer insects; those, even those, are conformable to his will, as the melting wax to the impressed seal.—Since all, all is obedient, throughout the whole ascent of things, shall man be the only rebel against the almighty Maker? Shall these unruly appetites reject his government, and refuse their allegiance? Shall these headstrong passions break loose from divine restraint, and run wild, in exorbitant sallies, after their own imaginations?

O my soul, be stung with remorse, and overwhelmed with confusion, at the thought! Is it not a righteous thing, that the blessed God should sway the sceptre, with the most absolute authority, over all the creatures which his power has formed? Especially over those creatures, whom his distinguishing favour has endued with the noble principle of reason, and made capable of a blissful immortality? Sure, if all the ranks of inanimate existence conform to their Maker's decree, by the necessity of their nature, this more excellent race of beings should pay their equal homage, by the willing compliance of their affections.*—Come then, all ye faculties of my mind; come, all ye powers of my body; give up yourselves, without a moment's delay, without the least reserve, to his governance. Stand, like dutiful servants, at his footstool, in an everlasting readiness to do whatsoever he requires; to be whatsoever he

* This argument, I acknowledge, is not absolutely conclusive; but it is popular and striking. Nor can I think myself obliged, in such a work, where fancy bears a considerable sway, to proceed always with the caution and exactness of a disputer in the schools. If there be some appearance of analogy, between the fact and the inference, it seems sufficient for my purpose; though the deduction should not be necessary, nor the process strictly syllogistical. One of the apostolic fathers has an affecting and sublime paragraph, which runs entirely in this form: Ηλιος τε και σεληνη, αστερων τε χοροι, κατα την διαταξιν αυτων ομονοια, ἐκλιπε ουδεν παρεκβασεως, ἐξελιττουσιν την συνηθειαμενοι αυτοις ορισμας. The sun, the moon, and the starry choir, without the least deviation, and with the utmost harmony, perform the revolutions appointed them by the supreme decree. From which remark, and abundance of other similar instances, observable in the economy of nature, he exhorts the Christians to a cordial unanimity among themselves, and a dutiful obedience to God.—Vid. *Clem. Romen. 1 ep. ad Corinth.* sect 20.—See also a beautiful Ode in Dr. Watt's Lyric Poems, entitled, *The Comparison and Complaint;* which turns upon this very thought.

appoints; to further, with united efforts, the purposes of his glory in this earthly scene: or else to separate, without reluctance, at his summons; the one, to sleep in the silent dust, the other, to advance his honour in some remoter colony of his kingdom.—Thus may I join, with all the works of the Lord, in all places of his dominion, to recognize his universal supremacy, and proclaim him Sovereign of souls, as well as Ruler of worlds.

At my first coming abroad, all these luminaries were eclipsed by the overpowering lustre of the sun. They were all placed in the very same stations, and played the same sprightly beams, yet not one of them was seen. As the day-light wore away, and the sober shades advanced, Hesperus, who leads the starry train, disclosed his radiant forehead, and catched my eye. While I stood gazing on his bright and beautiful aspect, several of his attendants peeped through the blue curtains. Scarce had I turned to observe these fresh emanations of splendour, but others dropt the veil, others stole into view. When, lo! faster and more numerous multitudes sprung from obscurity, they poured in shining troops, and in sweet confusion, over all the empyrean plain; till the firmament seemed like one vast constellation, and "a flood of glory burst from all the skies."

Is not such the rise, and such the progress, of a true conversion in the prejudiced infidel, or inattentive sinner? During the period of his vainer years, a thousand interesting truths lay utterly undiscovered; a thousand momentous concerns were entirely disregarded. But, when divine grace dissipates the delusive glitter which dazzled his understanding, and beguiled his affections; then he begins to discern, dimly to discern, the things which belong unto his peace. Some admonition of Scripture darts conviction into his soul, as the glimmering of a star pierces the gloom of night.—Then, perhaps, another awful or cheering text impresses terror, or diffuses comfort. A threatening alarms his fears, or a promise awakens his hopes. This, possibly,

is succeeded by some afflictive dispensation of Providence, and improved by some edifying and instructive conversation. All which is established, as to its continuance, and enlarged as to its influence, by a diligent study of the sacred word.—By this means, new truths continually pour their evidence. Scenes of refined and exalted, but hitherto unknown delight, address him with their attractives. New desires take wing, new pursuits are set on foot. A new turn of mind forms his temper, a new habit of conversation regulates his life. In a word, old things are passed away; and all things become new. He, who was sometimes darkness, is now light, and life, and joy in the Lord.

The more attentively I view the crystal concave, the more fully I discern the richness of its decorations.—Abundance of minuter lights, which lay concealed from a superficial notice, are visible on a closer examination. Especially in those tracts of the sky which are called the galaxy, and are distinguishable by a sort of milky path. There the stars are crowded, rather than disseminated. The region seems to be all on a blaze, with their blended rays. Besides this vast profusion, which in my present situation the eye discovers, was I to make my survey from any other part of the globe, lying near the southern pole, I should behold a new choir of starry bodies, which have never appeared within our horizon.—Was I (which is still more wonderful) either here or there, to view the firmament with the Virtuoso's glass, I should find a prodigious multitude of flaming orbs, which, immersed in depths of æther, escape the keenest unassisted sight.*—Yet in these various situations, even with the aid of the telescopic tube, I should not be able to descry the half—perhaps

* ————Come forth, O man, yon azure round survey,
And view those lamps which yield eternal day.
Bring forth thy glasses, clear thy wond'ring eyes;
Millions beyond the former millions rise:
Look farther—millions more blaze from remoter skies.

See an ingenious poem entitled—*The Universe.*

not a thousandth part of those majestic luminaries, which the vast expansive heavens contain.*—So, the more diligently I pursue my search into those oracles of eternal truth, the Scriptures, I perceive a wider, a deeper, an ever-increasing fund of spiritual treasures. I perceive the brighter strokes of wisdom, and the richer displays of goodness; a more transcendent excellency in the illustrious Messiah, and a more deplorable violence in fallen man; a more immaculate purity in God's law, and more precious privileges in his gospel. Yet, after a course of study, ever so assiduous, ever so prolonged, I should have reason to own myself a mere babe in heavenly knowledge; or, at most, but a puerile proficient in the school of Christ.

After all my most accurate inspection, those starry orbs appear but as glittering points. Even the planets, though so much nearer our earthly mansion, seem only like burning bullets. If then we have such imperfect apprehensions of visible and material things, how much more scanty and inadequate must be our notions of invisible and immortal objects!—We behold the stars:—though every one is incomparably bigger than the globe we inhabit, yet they dwindle, upon our survey, into the most diminutive forms. Thus we see, by faith, the glories of the blessed Jesus; the atoning efficacy of his death; the justifying merit of his righteousness; and the joys which are reserved for his followers. But, alas! even our most exalted ideas are vastly below the truth. As much below the truth, as the report which our eyes make of those celestial edifices is inferior to their real grandeur.—Should we take in all the magnifying assistances which art has contrived, those

* How noble, considered in this view, are the celebrations of the divine Majesty, which frequently occur in the sacred writings! It is the Lord that made the Heavens. *Psal.* xcvi. 5.—What a prodigious dignity does such a sense of things give to that devout ascription of praise! Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host. *Nehem.* ix. 5.—Examined by this rule, the beautiful climax in our inspired hymn is sublime beyond compare:—Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light: praise Him, ye heaven of heavens.—*Psal.* cxlviii. 3, 4.

luminous bodies would elude our skill, and appear as small as ever. Should an inhabitant of earth travel towards the cope of heaven, and be carried forwards in his aërial journey, more than a hundred and sixty millions of miles,* even in that advanced situation, those oceans of flame would look no larger than radiant specks.—In like manner, conceive ever so magnificently of the Redeemer's honours, and of the bliss which he has purchased for his people, yet you will fall short. Raise your imagination higher; stretch your invention wide; give them all the scope which a soaring and excursive fancy can take; still your conceptions will be extremely disproportionate to their genuine perfections. —Vast are the bodies which roll in the expanse of heaven; vaster far are those fields of æther, through which they run their endless round; but the excellency of Jesus, and the happiness laid up for his servants, are greater than either, than both, than all. An inspired writer calls the former, "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" and styles the latter, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory."

If those stars are so many inexhaustible magazines of fire, and immense reservoirs of light, there is no reason to doubt, but that they have some very grand uses, suitable to the magnificence of their nature. To specify or explain the particular purposes they answer, is altogether impossible, in our present state of distance and ignorance. This, however, we may clearly discern; they are disposed in that very manner which is most pleasing and most serviceable to mankind.—They are not placed at an infinite remove, so as to lie beyond our sight; neither are they brought so near our abode, as to annoy us with their beams. We see them shine on every side. The deep azure, which serves them as a

* This, incredible as it may seem, is not a mere supposition, but a real fact. For, about the twenty-first of December, we are above 160,000,000 of miles nearer the northern parts of the sky, than we were at the twenty-first of June; and yet, with regard to the stars situate in that quarter, we perceive no change in their aspect, nor any augmentation of their magnitude.

ground, heightens their splendour. At the same time, their influence is gentle, and their rays are destitute of heat. So that we are surrounded with a multitude of fiery globes, which beautify and illuminate the firmament, without any risk, either to the coolness of our night, or the quiet of our repose.—Who can sufficiently admire that wondrous benignity, which, on our account, strews the earth with blessings of every kind, and vouchsafes to make the very heavens subservient to our delight?

It is not solely to adorn the roof of our palace with costly gildings, that God commands the celestial luminaries to glitter through the gloom. We also reap considerable benefits from their ministry.—They divide our time, and fix its solemn periods. They settle the order of our works; and are, according to the destinations mentioned in sacred writ, "for signs, and for seasons; for days, and for years." The returns of heat and cold alone would have been too precarious a rule. But these radiant bodies, by the variation, and also by the regularity of their motions, afford a method of calculating absolutely certain, and sufficiently obvious. By this, the farmer is instructed when to commit his grain to the furrows, and how to conduct the operations of husbandry. By this, the sailor knows when to proceed on his voyage with least peril, and how to carry on the business of navigation with most success.

Why should not the Christian, the probationer for eternity, learn, from the same monitors, to number—for nobler purposes—to number his days, and duly to transact the grand, grand affairs of his everlasting salvation? Since God has appointed so many bright measurers of our time, to determine its larger periods, and to minute down its ordinary stages; sure, this most strongly inculcates its value, and should powerfully prompt us to improve it.—Behold! the supreme Lord marks the progress of our life, in that most conspicuous calender above. Does not such an ordination tell us, and in the most emphatical language, that our life is given for use,

not for waste? that no portion of it is delivered but under a strict account; that all of it is entered, as it passes, in the divine register; and, therefore, that the stewards of such a talent are to expect a future reckoning?—Behold! the very Heavens are bidden to be the accountants of our years, and months, and days. O! may this induce us to manage them, with a vigilant frugality; to part with them, as misers with their hoarded treasure, warily and circumspectly; and, if possible, as merchants with their rich commodities, not without an equivalent, either in personal improvement, or social usefulness!

How bright the starry diamonds shine! The ambition of eastern monarchs could imagine no distinction more noble and sublime, than that of being likened to those beaming orbs.* They form night's richest dress, and sparkle upon her sable robe, like jewels of the finest lustre. Like jewels! I wrong their character. The lucid stone has no brilliancy; quenched is the flame even of the golden topaz, compared with those glowing decorations of heaven.—How widely are their radiant honours diffused! No nation so remote but sees their beauty, and rejoices in their usefulness. They have been admired by all preceding generations; and every rising age will gaze on their charms with renewed delight.—How animating then is that promise, made to the faithful ministers of the gospel! "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever."† Is not this a most winning encouragement, "to spend and be spent," in the service of souls? Methinks, the stars beckon as they twinkle. Methinks, they shew me their splendours, on purpose to inspire me with alacrity in the race set before me; on purpose to enliven my activity in the work that is given me to do.—Yes, ye majestic monitors, I understand your meaning. If honour has any charms; if true glory, the glory which cometh from God, is any

* Numb. xxiv. 17. Dan. viii. 10. † Dan. xii. 3.

attractive; you display the most powerful incitements to exercise all assiduity in my holy vocation. I will henceforth observe your intimation; and when zeal becomes languid, have recourse to your heavenly lamps; if so be, I may re-kindle its ardour at those inextinguishable fires.

Of the polar star, it is observable, that, while other luminaries alter their situation, this seems invariably fixed.* While other luminaries now mount the battlements of heaven, and appear upon duty, now retire beneath the horizon, and resign to a fresh set the watches of the night, this never departs from its station. This, in every season, maintains an uniform position, and is always to be found in the same tract of the northern sky.—How often has this beamed bright intelligence on the sailor, and conducted the keel to its desired haven! In early ages, those who went down to the sea in ships, and occupied their business in great waters, had scarce any other sure guide for their wandering vessel. This, therefore, they viewed, with the most solicitous attention. By this, they formed their observations, and regulated their voyage. When this was obscured by clouds, or enveloped in mists, the trembling mariner was bewildered on the watery waste. His thoughts fluctuated as much as the floating surge; and he knew not where he was advanced, or whither he should steer. But, when this auspicious star broke through the gloom, it dissipated the anxiety of his mind, and cleared up his dubious passage. He reassumed, with alacrity, the management of the helm; and was able to shape his course with some tolerable degree of satisfaction and certainty.

Such, only much clearer in its light, and much surer in its direction, is the holy word of God, to those myriads of intellectual beings who are bound for the eter-

* I speak in conformity to the appearance of the object. For, though this remarkable star revolves round the pole, its motion is so slow, and the circle it describes so small, as render both the revolution and change of situation hardly perceiveable

nal shores; who, embarked in a vessel of feeble flesh, are to pass the waves of this tempestuous and perilous world. In all difficulties, those sacred pages shed an encouraging ray; in all uncertainties they suggest the right determination, and point out the proper procedure. What is still a more inestimable advantage, they, like the star which conducted the Eastern sages, make plain the way of access to a Redeemer. They display his unspeakable merits; they discover the method of being interested in his great atonement; and lead the weary soul, tossed by troubles, and shattered by temptations, to that only harbour of peaceful repose.—Let us, therefore, attend to this unerring directory, with the same constancy of regard as the sea-faring man observes his compass. Let us become as thoroughly acquainted with this sacred chart, as the pilot is with every trusty mark, that gives notice of a lurking rock, and with every open road, that yields a safe passage into the port. Above all, let us commit ourselves to this infallible guidance, with the same implicit resignation; let us comform our conduct to its exalted precepts, with the same sedulous care as the children of Israel, when sojourning in the trackless desert, followed the pillar of fire, and the motion of the miraculous cloud.—So will it introduce us, not into an earthly Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, but into an immortal paradise, where is the fulness of joy, and where are pleasures for evermore. It will introduce us into those happy, happy regions, where our sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning, together with the fatigues of our pilgrimage, shall be ended.*

I perceive a great variety in the size and splendour of those gems of heaven. Some are of the first magnitude; others of an inferior order. Some glow with intense flames, others glimmer with fainter beams.

* Isa. lx. 20.

Yet all are beautiful, all have their peculiar lustre, and distinct use; all tend, in their different degrees, to enamel the cope of heaven, and embroider the robe of night.—This circumstance is remarked by an author whose sentiments are a source of wisdom, and the very standard of truth. "One star," says the apostle to the Gentiles, "differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead."

In the world above are various degrees of happiness, various seats of honour. Some will rise to more illustrious distinctions and richer joys.* Some, like vessels of ample capacity, will admit more copious accessions of light and excellence. Yet there will be no want, no deficiency, in any; but a fulness both of divine satisfactions, and personal perfections. Each will enjoy all the good, and be adorned with all the glory, that his heart can wish, or his condition receive. —None will know what it is to envy. Not the least malevolence, nor the least selfishness, but everlasting friendship prevails, and a mutual complacency in each other's delight. Love, cordial love, will give every particular saint a participation of all the fruitions,† which are diffused through the whole assembly of the blessed.—No one eclipses, but each reflects light upon his brother. A sweet interchange of rays subsists; all enlightened by the great fountain, and all enlightening one another. By which reciprocal communication of pleasure and amity, each will be continually receiving from, each incessantly adding to, the general felicity.

Happy, supremely happy they, who are admitted into the celestial mansions. Better to be a door-keeper in those "Ivory Palaces,"‡ than to fill the most gorgeous throne on earth. The very lowest place at God's right

* 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. The great Mr. Mede prefers the sense here given; and the learned Dr. Hammond admits it into his Paraphrase; whose joint authority, though far from excluding any other, yet is a sufficient warrant for this application of the words.

† Tolle Invidiam, et tuum est quod habeo: Tolle Invidiam, et meum est quod habes.—*Augustine.*

‡ Psal. xlv. 8.

hand is distinguished honour, and consummate bliss.—Oh! that we may, in some measure, anticipate that beatific state while we remain in our banishment below! May we, by rejoicing in the superior prosperity of another, make it our own! and, provided the general result is harmony, be content, be pleased with whatever part is assigned to our share in the universal choir of affairs.

While I am considering the heavenly bodies, I must not entirely forget those fundamental laws of our modern astronomy, projection and attraction. One of which is the all-combining cement, the other is the ever-operative spring of the mighty frame.—In the beginning, the all-creating fiat impressed a proper degree of motion on each of those whirling orbs; which, if not controlled, would have carried them on in strait lines, and to endless lengths, till they were even lost in the abyss of space. But, the gravitating property being added to the projectile force, determined their courses to a circular form,* and obliged the reluctant rovers to perform their destined rounds.—Were either of those causes to suspend their action, all the harmoniously moving spheres would be disconcerted—would degenerate into sluggish inactive masses; and, falling into the central fire, be burnt to ashes; or else would exorbitate into wild confusion, and each, by the rapidity of its whirl, be dissipated into atoms. But the impulsive and attractive energy being most nicely attem-

* I am aware the planetary orbs are not strictly circular, but rather elliptical. However, as they are but a small remove from the perfectly round figure, and partake of it incomparably more that the trajectories of the comets, I choose to represent the thing in this view. Especially, because the notion of a circle is so much more intelligible to the generality of readers, than that of an ellipsis; and because I laid it down for a rule, not to admit any such abstruse sentiment, or difficult expression, as should demand a painful attention, instead of raising an agreeable idea. For which reason, I have avoided technical terms; have taken no notice of Jupiter's satellites, or Saturn's ring; have not so much as mentioned the names of the planets, nor attempted to wade into any depths of the science: lest to those who have no opportunity of using the telescope, or of acquainting themselves with a system of astronomy, I should propound riddles, rather than display entertaining and edifying truths.

pered to each other, and under the immediate operation of the Almighty, exerting themselves in perpetual concert, the various globes run their radiant races without the least interruption, or the least deviation; so as to create the alternate changes of day and night, and distribute the useful vicissitudes of succeeding seasons; so as to answer all the great ends of a gracious Providence, and procure every comfortable convenience for universal nature.

Does not this constitution of the material very naturally lead the thoughts to those grand principles of the moral and devotional world, faith and love? These are often celebrated by the inspired apostle, as a comprehensive summary of the gospel.* These inspirit the breast, and regulate the progress of each private Christian. These unite the whole congregation of the faithful to God and one another: to God, the great centre, in the bonds of gratitude and devotion; to one another, by a reciprocal intercourse of brotherly affections and friendly offices.—If you ask, why is it impossible for the true believer to live at all adventures? to stagnate in sloth, or habitually to deviate from duty?—We answer, it is owing "to his faith working by love."† He assuredly trusts, that Christ has sustained the infamy, and endured the torment due to his sins. He firmly relies on that Divine Propitiation for the pardon of all his guilt; and humbly expects everlasting salvation as the purchase of his Saviour's merits. This produces such a spirit of gratitude, as refines his inclinations and animates his whole behaviour. He cannot, he cannot run to excess of riot; because love to his adorable Redeemer, like a strong, but silken curb, sweetly restrains him. He cannot, he cannot lie lulled in a lethargic indolence, because love to the same infinite Benefactor, like a pungent, but endearing spur, pleasingly excites him.—In a word, faith supplies the powerful impulse, while love gives the determining bias, and leads the

* Col. i. 4. Philem. ver. 5. † Gal. v. 6.

willing feet through the whole circle of God's commandments. By the united efficacy of these heavenly graces, the Christian conduct is preserved in the uniformity and beauty of holiness; as, by the blended power of those Newtonian principles, the solar system revolves in a steady and magnificent regularity.

How admirable, how extensive, how diversified is the force of this single principle, attraction!*—This penetrates the very essence of all bodies, and diffuses itself to the remotest limits of the mundane system.—By this, the worlds, impressed with motion, hang self-balanced on their centres;† and, though orbs of immense magnitude, require nothing but this amazing property for their support.—To this we ascribe a phænomenon of a very different kind, the pressure of the atmosphere; which, though a yielding expansive fluid, yet, constipated by an attractive energy, surrounds the whole globe, and encloses every creature, as it were, with a tight bandage. An expedient, this, absolutely necessary to preserve the texture of our bodies, and, indeed, to maintain every species of animal existence. Attraction! urged by this wonderful impetus, the rivers circulate, copious and unintermitted, among all the nations of the earth, sweeping with rapidity down the steeps, or softly ebbing through the plains. Impelled by the same mysterious force, the nutricious juices are detached from the soil; and, ascending the trees, find their way through millions of the finest meanders, in order to transfuse vegetative life into all the branches.—This confines the ocean within proper bounds. Though the waves thereof roar, though they toss themselves with all the madness of indignant rage; yet, checked by this potent, this inevitable curb, they are unable to pass even the slight barrier of sand. To this, the mountains owe that unshaken firmness, which laughs at the shock of careering winds, and bids the tempest,

* I mean the attraction both of gravitation and cohesion.

† Ponderibus librata suis.

with all its mingled horrors, impotently rave.—By virtue of this invisible mechanism, without the aid of crane or pulley, or any instrument of human device, many thousand tons of water are raised, every moment, into the regions of the firmament. By this, they continue suspended in thin air, without any capacious cistern to contain their substance, or any massy pillars to sustain their weight. By this same variously acting power, they return to the place of their native residence, distilled in gentle falls of dew, or precipitated in impetuous showers of rain. They slide into the fields in fleecy flights of snow, or are darted upon the houses in clattering storms of hail.—This occasions the strong cohesion of solid bodies: without which, our large machines could exert themselves with no vigour, and the nicer utensils of life would elude our expectations of service. This affords a foundation for all those delicate or noble mechanic arts, which furnish mankind with numberless conveniences, both of ornament and delight. In short, this is the prodigious ballast which composes the equilibrium, and constitutes the stability of things; this the great chain, which forms the connexions of universal nature, and the mighty engine which prompts, facilitates, and, in good measure, accomplishes all her operations.—What complicated effects from a single cause!* What profusion amidst frugality! An unknown profusion of benefits, with the utmost frugality of expense!

And what is this attraction? Is it a quality, in its existence, inseparable from matter, and, in its acting, independent on the Deity?—Quite the reverse. It is the very finger of God; the constant impression of divine power; a principle neither innate in matter, nor intelligible by mortals.—Does it not, however, bear a considerable analogy to the agency of the Holy Ghost, in the Christian economy? Are not the gracious opera-

* See another remarkable instance of this kind, in the Reflections on a Flower Garden, page 104;—together with a fine observation quoted in the corresponding note.

tions of the blessed Spirit thus extensive, thus admirable, thus various?—That almighty Being transmits his gifts through every age, and communicates his graces to every adherent on the Redeemer. All, either of illustrious memory, or of beneficial tendency—in a word, "all the good that is done upon earth, He doth it himself." Strong in his aid, and in the power of his might, the saints of all times have trod vice under their feet, have triumphed over this abject world, and conversed in heaven while they dwelt on earth. "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me,"* is the unanimous acknowledgment of them all.—By the same kindly succours, the whole church is still enlightened, quickened, and governed. Through his benign influences, the scales of ignorance fall from the understanding, the leprosy of evil concupiscence is purged from the will; and the fetters, the more than adamantine fetters of habitual iniquity, drop off from the conversation. He breathes even upon dry bones,† and they live: they are animated with faith; they pant with ardent and heavenly desire; they exercise themselves in all the duties of godliness.—His real, though secret inspiration, dissolves the flint in the impenitent breast, and binds up the sorrows of the broken heart; raises the thoughts high in the elevation of holy hope, yet lays them low in the humiliations of inward abasement; steels the soul with impenetrable resolution, and persevering fortitude; and at the same time softens it into a dove-like meekness, and melts it in penitential sorrow.

When I contemplate those ample and magnificent structures erected over all the æthereal plains; when I look upon them as so many splendid repositories of light, or fruitful abodes of life:—when I remember that there may be other orbs, vastly more remote than those which appear to our unaided sight;—orbs, whose effulgence, though travelling ever since the creation, is

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

† See that beautiful piece of sacred and allegorical imagery displayed, *Ezek.* xxxvii.

not yet arrived upon our coasts:*—when I stretch my thoughts to the innumerable orders of being which inhabit all those spacious systems—from the loftiest seraph to the lowest reptile; from the armies of angels, which surround the throne of Jehovah, to the puny nations which tinge with blue the surface of the plum,† or mantle the standing pool with green;—how various appear the links in this immense chain! how vast the gradations in this universal scale of existence! Yet all these, though ever so vast and various, are the work of God's hand, and are full of his presence.

He rounded in his palm those dreadfully large globes which are pendulous in the vault of heaven. He kindled those astonishingly bright fires, which fill the firmament with a flood of glory. By Him they are suspended in fluid ether, and cannot be shaken; by him they dispense a perpetual tide of beams, and are never exhausted.—He formed, with inexpressible nicety, that delicately fine collection of tubes; that unknown multiplicity of subtle springs, which organize and actuate the frame of the minutest insect. He bids the crimson

* If this conjecture, (which has no less a person than the celebrated Mr. Huygens for its author,) concerning unseen stars, be true;—if to this observation be added, what is affirmed by our skilful astronomers, that the motion of the rays of light is so surprisingly swift as to pass through ten millions of miles in a single minute—how vast! beyond imagination vast and unmeasurable, are the spaces of the universe!—While the mind is distended with the grand idea; or rather, while she is, despatching her ablest powers of piercing judgment, and excursive fancy, and finds them all drop short—all baffled by the amazing subject—permit me to apply that spirited exclamation, and noble remark:—

> ———Say, proud arch,
> Built with divine ambition; in disdain
> Of limit built: built in the taste of heav'n!
> Vast concave! ample dome! wast thou design'd
> A meet apartment for the Deity?
> Not so: that thought alone thy state impairs:
> Thy lofty sinks, and shallows thy profound;
> And straitens thy diffusive.—*Night-Thoughts*, No. IX.

† Ev'n the blue down the purple plum surrounds,
A living world, thy falling sight confounds.
To Him a peopled habitation shews,
Where millions taste the bounty God bestows.

See a beautiful and instructive poem, styled—*Deity*.

current roll, the vital movements play, and associates a world of wonders even in an animated point.*—In all these is a signal exhibition of creating power; to all these are extended the special regards of preserving goodness. From hence let me learn to rely on the providence, and to revere the presence, of the supreme Majesty.

To rely on his providence:—for, amidst that inconceivable number and variety of beings which swarm through the regions of creation, not one is overlooked, not one is neglected, by the great omnipotent cause of all:—however inconsiderable in its character, or diminutive in its size, it is still the production of the universal Maker, and belongs to the family of the almighty Father.—What? though enthroned archangels enjoy the smiles of his countenance! yet the low inhabitants of earth, the most despicable worms of the ground, are not excluded from his providential care. Though the manifestation of his perfections is vouchsafed to holy and intellectual essences, his ear his open to the cries of the young raven. His eye is attentive to the wants and to the welfare of the very meanest births of nature—How much less then are his own people disregarded? Those for whom he has delivered his beloved Son to death, and for whom he has prepared habitations of eternal joy? They disregarded! No: they are "kept as the apple of an eye." The very hairs of their head are all numbered. The fondest mother may forget the

* There are living creatures abundantly smaller than the mite. Mr. Bradley, in his Treatise on Gardening, mentions an insect which, after accurate examination, he found to be a thousand times less than the least visible grain of sand. Yet such an insect, though quite imperceptible to the naked eye, is an elephant, is a whale, compared with other animalcules, almost infinitely more minute, discovered by Mr. Lewenhoeck.—If we consider the several limbs which compose such an organized particle; the different muscles which actuate such a set of limbs; the flow of spirits, incomparably more attenuated, which put those muscles in motion; the various fluids which circulate; the different secretions which are performed; together with the peculiar minuteness of the solids, before they arrive at their full growth—not to mention other more astonishing modes of diminution;—sure, we shall have the utmost reason to acknowledge, that the adored Maker is maximus in minimis;—greatly glorious even in his smallest works.

infant that is "dandled upon her knees," and sucks at her breast,* much sooner than the Father of everlasting compassions can discontinue, or remit, his watchful tenderness to his people—his children—his heirs.

Let this teach me also a more lively sense of the divine Presence.—All the rolling worlds above, all the living atoms below, together with all the beings that intervene betwixt these wide extremes, are vouchers for an ever-present Deity. "God has not left himself without witness." The marks of his footsteps are evident in every place, and the touches of his finger distinguishable in every creature. "Thy name is so nigh, O thou all-supporting, all-informing Lord; and that do thy wonderous works declare.† Thy goodness warms in the morning sun, and refreshes in the evening breeze. Thy glory shines in the lamps of midnight, and smiles in the

* Isai. xlix. 15. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee."—How delicate and expressive are the images in this charming scripture! How full of beauty, if beheld in a critical, how rich with consolation, if considered in a believing view! —Can a woman, one of the softer sex, whose nature is most impressible, and whose passions are remarkably tender;—can such a one not barely disregard, but entirely forget; not suspend her care for a while, but utterly erase the very memory of her child; her own child, not another's;—a child that was formed in her womb, and is a part of herself?—her son; the more important, and therefore more desirable species; to whom it peculiarly belongs to preserve the name, and build up the family—her only son, for the word is singular, and refers to a case where the offspring not being numerous, but centered in a single birth, must be productive of the fondest endearment;—can she divest herself of all concern for such a child; not when he is grown up to maturity, or gone abroad from her house, but while he continues in an infantile state, and must owe his whole safety to her kind attendance; while he lies in her bosom, rests on her arm, and even sucks at her breast?—especially if the poor innocent be racked with pain, or seized by some severe affliction, and so become an object of compassion, as well as of love;—can she hear its piercing cries; can she see it all restless, all helpless under its misery, and feel no emotions of parental pity?—If one such monster of inhumanity might be found, could all, (here the prophet, to give his comparison the utmost energy, changes the singular number into the plural:—it is not הֵמָּה, or אֵלֶּה, but הֵמָּה אֵלֶּה,) could all mothers be so degenerate? this, sure, cannot be suspected, need not be feared:—much less need the true believer be apprehensive of the failure of my kindness.—An universal extinction of those strongest affections of nature is a more supposable case, than that I should ever be unmindful of my people, or regardless of their interests.

† Psal. lxxv. 2.

blossoms of spring. We see a trace of thy incomprehensible grandeur in the boundless extent of things, and a sketch of thy exquisite skill in those almost evanescent sparks of life, the insect race."—How stupid is this heart of mine, that, amidst such a multitude of remembrances, thronging on every side, I should forget Thee a single moment! Grant me, thou great I Am, thou source and support of universal existence—O! grant me an enlightened eye to discern Thee in every object, and a devout heart to adore Thee on every occasion. Instead of living without God in the world, may I be ever with Him, and see all things full of Him!

> ———The glitt'ring stars
> By the deep ear of meditation heard,
> Still in their midnight watches sing of Him.
> He nods a calm. The tempest blows his wrath:
> The thunder is His voice; and the red flash
> His speedy sword of justice. At His touch
> The mountains flame. He shakes the solid earth,
> And rocks the nations. Nor in these alone—
> In ev'ry common instance God is seen.—*Thomson's Spring.*

If the beautiful spangles which a clear night pours on the beholder's eye; if those other fires which beam in remoter skies, and are discoverable only by that revelation to the sight, the telescope; if all those bright millions are so many fountains of day, enriched with native and independent lustre, illuminating planets, and enlivening systems of their own?* what pomp, how majestic and splendid, is disclosed in the midnight scene! What riches are disseminated through all those numberless provinces of the great Jehovah's empire! Grandeur beyond expression!—Yet there is not the meanest slave but carries greater wealth in his own bosom, possesses superior dignity in his own person. The soul that informs his clay—the soul that teaches him to think,

> * Consult with reason. Reason will reply,
> Each lucid point which glows in yonder sky,
> Informs a system in the boundless space,
> And fills with glory its appointed place;
> With beams unborrow'd, brightens other skies,
> And worlds, to thee unknown, with heat and life supplies.
> *The Universe.*

and enables him to choose, that qualifies him to relish rational pleasure, and to breathe sublime desire;*—the soul that is endowed with such noble faculties, and, above all, is distinguished with the dreadful, the glorious capacity, of being pained or blessed for ever—this soul surpasses in worth whatever the eye can see, whatever of material the fancy can imagine. Before one such intellectual being, all the treasure and all the magnificence of unintelligent creation becomes poor and contemptible.† For this soul, omnipotence itself has waked and worked through every age. To convince this soul the fundamental laws of nature have been controlled, and the most amazing miracles have alarmed all the ends of the earth. To instruct this soul, the wisdom of heaven has been transfused into the sacred page, and missionaries have been sent from the great king, who resides in light unapproachable. To sanctify this soul, the almighty Comforter takes the wings of a dove; and, with a sweet transforming influence, broods on the human heart.—And O! to redeem this soul from guilt, to rescue it from hell, the heaven of heavens was bowed, and God himself came down to dwell in dust.

Let me pause a while upon this important subject.—What are the schemes wich engage the attention of eminent statesmen and mighty monarchs, compared with the grand interests of an immortal soul? The support of commerce, and the success of armies, though extremely weighty affairs; yet, if laid in the balance against the salvation of a soul, are lighter than the

* In this respect, as vested with such capacities, the soul even of fallen men, has an unquestionable greatness and dignity; is majestic, though in ruin.

† I beg leave to transcribe a pertinent passage from that celebrated master of reason, and universal literature, Dr. Bentley; whom no one can be tempted to suspect either tinctured with enthusiasm, or warped to bigotry.—"If we consider," says he, "the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scale against brute and inanimate matter, we may affirm, without overvaluing human nature, that the soul of one virtuous and religious man is of greater worth and excellency than the sun and his planets, and all the stars in the world."

See his Sermons at Boyle's Lect. No. 8.

downy feather poised against talents of gold. To save a navy from shipwreck, or a kingdom from slavery, are deliverances of the most momentous nature, which the transactions of mortality can admit. But O! how they shrink into an inconsiderable trifle, if (their aspect upon immortality forgot) they are set in competition with the delivery of a single soul from the anguish and horrors of a distressed eternity!*

Is such the importance of the soul! What vigilance then can be too much, or rather what holy solicitude can be sufficient, for the overseers of the Saviour's flock, and the guardians of this great, this venerable, this invaluable charge?—Since such is the importance of the soul, wilt thou not, O man, be watchful for the preservation of thy own? Shall every casual incident awaken thy concern, every transitory toy commank thy regard? And shall the welfare of thy soul, a word of continual occurrence, a work of endless consequence, sue in vain for thy serious care?—Thy soul, thy soul, is thy all. If this be secured, thou art greatly rich, and will be unspeakably happy. If this be lost, a whole world acquired will leave thee in poverty; and all its delights enjoyed, will abandon thee to misery.

I have often been charmed and awed at the sight of the nocturnal heavens, even before I knew how to consider them in their proper circumstances of majesty and beauty. Something like magic has struck my mind, on a transient and unthinking survey of the æthereal vault, tinged throughout with the purest azure, and decorated with innumerable starry lamps. I have felt, I know not what, powerful and aggrandizing impulse, which seemed to snatch me from the low entanglements of vanity, and prompted an ardent sigh for sublimer objects. Methought I heard, even from the silent spheres, a commanding call, to spurn the

* Not all yon luminaries, quench'd at once,
Were half so sad as one benighted mind,
Which gropes for happiness and meets despair.
Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

abject earth, and pant after unseen delights.—Henceforward I hope to imbibe more copiously this moral emanation of the skies, when, in some such manner as the preceding, they are rationally seen, and the sight is duly improved. The stars, I trust, will teach as well as shine, and help to dispel both nature's gloom and my intellectual darkness. To some people they discharge no better a service, than that of holding a flambeau to their feet, and softening the horrors of their night. To me and my friends may they act as ministers of a superior order; as counsellors of wisdom, and guides to happiness! Nor will they fail to execute this nobler office, if they gently light our way into the knowledge of their adored Maker; if they point out, with their silver rays, our path to his beatific presence.

I gaze, I ponder; I ponder, I gaze; and think ineffable things.—I roll an eye of awe and admiration. Again and again I repeat my ravished views, and can never satiate either my curiosity or my inquiry. I spring my thoughts into this immense field, till even fancy tires upon her wing. I find wonders ever new, wonders more and more amazing.—Yet, after all my present inquiries, what a mere nothing do I know; by all my future searches, how little shall I be able to learn of those vastly distant suns, and their circling retinue of worlds! Could I pry with Newton's piercing sagacity, or launch into his extensive surveys; even then, my apprehensions would be little better than those dim and scanty images, which the mole, just emerged from her cavern, receives on her feeble optic.—This, sure, should repress all impatient or immoderate ardour to pry into the secrets of the starry structures, and make me more particularly careful to cultivate my heart. To fathom the depths of the Divine Essence, or to scan universal nature with a critical exactness, is an attempt which sets the acutest philosopher very nearly on a level with the idiot. Since it is almost, if not altogether, as impracticable by the former as by the latter.

Be it then my chief study, not to pursue what is

solutely unattainable, but rather to seek what is obvious to find; easy to be acquired; and of inestimable advantage when possessed. O! let me seek that charity which edifieth;* that faith which purifieth. Love, humble love, not conceited science, keeps the door of heaven. Faith, a child-like faith in Jesus, not the haughty self-sufficient spirit, which scorns to be ignorant of any thing, presents a key† to those abodes of bliss.—This present state is the scene destined to the exercise of devotion; the invisible world is the place appointed for the enjoyment of knowledge. There the dawn of our infantile minds will be advanced to the maturity of perfect day; or rather, there our midnight shades will be brightened into all the lustre of noon: there, the souls which come from the school of faith, and bring with them the principles of love, will dwell in light itself; will be obscured with no darkness at all;—will know, even as they are known.‡—Such an acquaintance, therefore, do I desire to form, and to carry on such a correspondence with the heavenly bodies, as may shed a benign influence on the seeds of grace implanted in my breast. Let the exalted tracts of the firmament sink my soul into deep humiliation;—let those eternal fires kindle in my heart an adoring gratitude to their Almighty Sovereign;—let yonder

* 1 Cor. viii. 1. I need not inform my reader, that, in this text, in that admirable chapter, 1 *Cor.* xiii. and in various other passages of scripture, the word charity should by no means be confined to the particular act of alms-giving, or external beneficence. It is of a much more exalted and extensive nature. It signifies that divinely precious grace, which warms the soul with supreme love to God, and enlarges it with disinterested affection for men; which renders it the reigning care of the life, and chief delight of the heart, to promote the happiness of the one, and the glory of the other.—This, this is that charity, of which so many excellent things are every where spoken:—which can never be too highly extolled, or too earnestly coveted, since it is the image of God, and the very spirit of heaven.

† The righteousness of Christ. This is what Milton beautifully styles,

"———The golden key,
That opes the palace of eternity."

‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

ponderous and enormous globes, which rest on his supporting arm, teach me an unshaken affiance in their Incarnate Maker:—then shall I be—if not wise as the astronomical adept, yet wise unto salvation.

Having now walked and worshipped in this universal temple, that is arched with skies, emblazed with stars, and extended even to immensity;—having cast an eye, like the enraptured patriarch,* an eye of reason and devotion, through the magnificent scene;—with the former, having discovered an infinitude of worlds, and with the latter, having met the Deity in every view:—having beheld, as Moses in the flaming bush, a glimpse of Jehovah's excellencies! reflected from the several planets, and streaming from myriads of celestial luminaries;—having read various lessons in that stupendous book of wisdom,† where unmeasurable sheets of azure compose the page, and orbs of radiance write, in everlasting characters, a comment on our creed:—what remains, but that I close the midnight solemnity, as our Lord concluded his grand sacramental institution, with a song of praise?—And behold a hymn suited to the sublime occasion, indited by inspiration‡ itself; transferred into our language by one of the happiest efforts of human ingenuity.§

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heav'ns, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim!
Th' unwearied sun from day to day,
Does his Creator's pow'r display;
And publishes to every land,
The work of an Almighty Hand.

Soon as the ev'ning shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wond'rous tale;

* Gen. xv. 5.

† ———For heaven
Is as the book of God before thee set,
Wherein to read His wondrous works.—*Milt.*

‡ Psal. xix. § Addison, Spect. Vol. VI. No. 465.

And nightly, to the list'ning earth,
Repeats the story of her birth:
While all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though, in solemn silence, all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing, as they shine,
"The Hand that made us, is Divine!"

WINTER-PIECE.

Storms and tempests may calm the soul—snow and ice be taught to warm the heart, and praise the Creator.

Anonymous Letter to the Author.

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A

WINTER-PIECE.

IT is true, in the delightful seasons, His tenderness and His love are most eminently displayed.—In the vernal months, all is beauty to the eye, and music to the ear. The clouds drop fatness, the air softens into balm, and flowers, in rich abundance, spring wherever we tread—bloom wherever we look.—Amidst the burning heats of summer He expands the leaves, and thickens the shades: He spreads the cooling arbour to receive us, and awakes the gentle breeze to fan us. The moss swells into a couch, for the repose of our bodies; while the rivulet softly rolls, and sweetly murmurs, to sooth our imagination.—In autumn, His bounty covers the fields with a profusion of nutrimental treasure, and bends the boughs with loads of delicious fruit. He furnishes his hospitable board with present plenty, and prepares a copious magazine for future wants.—But, is it only in these smiling periods of the year, that God, the all-gracious God is seen? Has winter, stern winter, no tokens of his presence? Yes; all things are eloquent of his praise. "His way is in the whirlwind." Storms and tempests fulfil his word, and extol his power. Even piercing frosts bear witness to his goodness, while they bid the shivering nations tremble at H[illegible]

wrath. Be winter then, for a while, our theme.* Perhaps those barren scenes may be fruitful of intellectual improvement. Perhaps, that rigorous cold, which binds the earth in icy chains, may serve to enlarge our hearts, and warm them with holy love.

See how the day is shortened!—The sun, detained in fairer climes, or engaged in more agreeable services, rises like an unwilling visitant, with tardy and reluctant steps. He walks, with a shy indifference, along the edges of the southern sky; casting an oblique glance, he just looks upon our dejected world, and scarcely scatters light through the thick air. Dim is his appearance, languid are his gleams, while he continues. Or, if he chance to wear a brighter aspect, and a cloudless brow, yet, like the young and gay in the house of mourning, he seems uneasy till he is gone, is in haste to depart.—And let him depart. Why should we wish for his longer stay, since he can show us nothing but the creation in distress? The flowery families lie dead, and the tuneful tribes are struck dumb. The trees, stript of their verdure, and lashed by storms, spread their naked arms to the enraged and relentless heavens. Fragrance no longer floats in the air, but chilling damps hover, or cutting gales blow. Nature, divested of all her beautiful robes, sits, like a forlorn disconsolate widow in her weeds; while winds, in doleful accents, howl; and rains, in repeated showers, weep.

We regret not, therefore, the speedy departure of the day. When the room is hung with funeral black, and dismal objects are all around, who would desire to have the glimmering taper kept alive? which can

* A sketch of this nature, I must acknowledge, is quite different from the subject of the book; and, I cannot but declare, was as far distant from the thoughts of the author: but the desire of several acquaintance, together with an intimation of its usefulness, by a very polite letter from an unknown hand, prevailed with me to add a few descriptive touches, and improving hints, on what is so often experienced in these northern regions. I hope the attempt I have made to oblige these gentlemen, will obtain the approbation, or at least the excuse, of my other readers.

only discover spectacles of sorrow—can only make the horror visible.—And, since this mortal life is little better than a continual conflict with sin, or an unremitted struggle with misery, is it not a gracious ordination, which has reduced our age to a span? Fourscore years of trial for the virtuous, are sufficiently long; and more than such a term allowed to the wicked, would render them beyond all measure vile. Our way to the kingdom of heaven lies through tribulations. Shall we then accuse, shall we not rather bless, the Providence which has made the passage short? Soon, soon we cross the vale of tears, and then arrive on the happy hills, where light for ever shines—where joy for ever smiles.

Sometimes, the day is rendered shorter still; is almost blotted out from the year.* The vapours gather; they thicken into an impenetrable gloom, and obscure the face of the sky. At length the rains descend; the sluices of the firmament are opened, and the low-hung clouds pour their congregated stores. Copious and unintermitted, still they pour, and still are unexhausted. The waters drop incessantly from the eaves, and rush in rapid streams from the spouts. They roar along the channelled pavements, and stand in foul shallows amidst the village streets. Now, if the inattentive eye, or negligent hand, has left the roof but scantily covered, the insinuating element finds its way into every flaw, and oozing through the ceiling, at once upbraids and chastises the careless inhabitant. The ploughman, soaked to the skin, leaves his half-tilled acre. The poor poultry, dripping with wet, crowd into shelter. The tenants of the bough fold up their wings, afraid to launch into the streaming air. The beasts, joyless and dispirited, ruminate under their sheds. The roads swim, and the brooks swell. The river, amidst all this watery ferment, long contained

* Involvere diem nimbi, et nox humida cœlum
Abstulit.— *Virg.*

itself within its appointed bounds;—but, swollen by innumerable currents—and roused, at last, into uncontrollable rage—bursts over its banks; shoots into the plain; bears down all opposition; spreads itself far and wide; and buries the meadow under a brown, sluggish, soaking deluge.

How happy for man, that this inundation comes when there are no flowery crops in the valley to be overwhelmed; no fields standing thick with corn, to be laid waste! At such a juncture, it would have been ruin to the husbandman and his family: but, thus timed, it yields manure for his ground, and promises him riches in reversion.—How often, and how long, has the Divine Majesty bore with the most injurious affronts from sinners! His goodness triumphed over their perverseness, and graciously refused to be exasperated. But, O presumptuous creatures, multiply no longer your provocations. Urge not, by repeated iniquities, the Almighty Arm to strike, lest his long-suffering cease, and his fierce anger break forth; break forth, like a flood of waters,* and sweep you away into irrecoverable and everlasting perdition.

How mighty! how majestic! and O, how mysterious are thy works, thou God of Heaven, and Lord of Nature!—When the air is calm, where sleep the stormy winds? In what chambers are they reposed, or in what dungeons confined! till thou art pleased to awaken their rage, and throw open their prison-doors?—Then, with irresistible impetuosity, they fly forth, scattering dread, and menacing destruction.

The atmosphere is hurled into the most tumultuous confusion. The aerial torrent bursts its way over mountains, seas, and continents. All things feel the dreadful shock; all things tremble before the furious blast. The forest, vexed and tore, groans under the scourge: her sturdy sons are strained to the very root, and almost sweep the soil, they were wont to shade.

* Hos. v. 10.

The stubborn oak that disdains to bend, is dashed headlong to the ground, and, with shattered arms, with prostrate trunk, blocks the road.—While the flexile reeds that springs up in the marsh, yielding to the gust (as the meek and pliant temper to injuries, or the resigned and patient spirit to misfortunes,) eludes the force of the storm, and survives amidst the wide-spread havock.

For a moment, the turbulent and outrageous sky seems to be assuaged, but it intermits its wrath only to increase its strength. Soon the sounding squadrons of the air return to the attack, and renew their ravages with redoubled fury. The stately dome rocks amidst the wheeling clouds. The impregnable tower totters on its basis, and threatens to overwhelm whom it was intended to protect. The ragged rock is rent in pieces;* and even the hills, the perpetual hills, on their deep foundations, are scarcely secure. Where now is the place of safety? when the city reels, and houses become heaps! Sleep affrighted flies. Diversion is turned into horror. All is uproar in the element, all is consternation among mortals, and nothing but one wide scene of rueful devastation through the land.—Yet this is only an inferior minister of divine displeasure; the executioner of milder indignation. How then,—O! "how will the lofty looks of man be humbled, and the haughtiness of men be bowed down;†" when the Lord God Omnipotent shall meditate terror

* 1 Kings xix. 11.

† ———Mortalia corda
Per gentes humilis stravit pavor.—*Virg.*

One would almost imagine that Virgil had read Isaiah, and borrowed his ideas from Chap. ii. Ver. 11. The humilis and stravit of the one, so exactly correspond with the humbled, bowed down, of the other. But in one circumstance, the prophet is very much superior to the poet. The prophet, by giving a striking contrast to his sentiments, represents them with incomparably greater energy. He says, not men in the gross, or the human heart in general; but men of the most elated looks; hearts big with the most arrogant imaginations. Even these shall stoop from their supercilious heights; even these shall grovel in the dust of abasement, and shudder with all the extremes of an abject pusillanimity.

—when he shall set all his terrors in array—when he arises to judge the nations, and to shake terribly the earth!

The ocean swells with tremendous commotions. The ponderous waves are heaved from their capacious beds, and almost lay bare the unfathomable deep. Flung into the most rapid agitation, they sweep over the rocks, they lash the lofty cliffs, and toss themselves into the clouds. Navies are rent from their anchors, and, with all their enormous load, are whirled, swift as the arrow, wild as the winds, along the vast abyss. —Now they climb the rolling mountain; they plough the frightful ridge, and seem to skim the skies: anon, they plunge into the opening gulf; they lose the sight of day, and are lost themselves to every eye. How vain is the pilot's art! how impotent the mariner's strength! They reel to and fro, and stagger in the jarring hold, or cling to the cordage, while bursting seas foam over the deck. Despair is in every face, and death sits threatening on every surge.—But why, O ye astonished mariners, why should you abandon yourselves to despair? Is the Lord's hand shortened because the waves of the sea rage horribly? Is his ear deafened by the roaring thunders and the bellowing tempest? Cry, cry unto him, "who holdeth the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand." He is all-gracious to hear, and all-mighty to save. If He command, the storm shall be hushed to silence, the billows shall subside into a calm, the lightnings shall lay their fiery bolts; aside and instead of sinking in the watery grave, you shall find yourselves brought to the desired haven.

Sometimes after a joyless day, a more dismal night succeeds.—The lazy lowering vapours had wove so thick a veil, as the meridian sun could scarcely penetrate. What gloom then must overwhelm the nocturnal hours! The moon withdraws her shining. Not a single star is able to struggle through the deep arrangement of shades. All is pitchy darkness, without one

enlivening ray.—How solemn! how awful! it is like the shroud of nature, or the return of chaos. I do not wonder that it is the parent of terrors, and so apt to engender melancholy. Lately the tempest marked its rapid way with mischief; now the night dresses her silent pavilion with horror.

I have sometimes left the beaming tapers, withdrawn from the ruddy fire, and plunged into the thickest of these sooty shades, without regretting the change; rather exulting in it as a welcome deliverance. The very gloom was pleasing, was exhilirating, compared with the conversation I quitted. The speech of my companions (how does it grieve me, that I should even once have occasion to call them by that name!) was the language of darkness; was horror to the soul, and torture to the ear.—Their teeth were spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword, to stab and assassinate their neighbour's character. Their throat was an open sepulchre, gaping to devour the reputation of the innocent, or tainting the air with their virulent and polluted breath.—Sometimes, their licentious and ungovernable discourse shot arrows of profaneness against heaven itself; and, in proud defiance, challenged the resentment of Omnipotence. Sometimes, as if it was the glory of human nature to cherish the grossest appetites of the brute, or the mark of a gentleman to have served an apprenticeship in a brothel, the filthiest jests of the stews (if low obscenity can be a jest) were nauseously obtruded on the company. All the modest part were offended and grieved, while the other besotted creatures laughed aloud, though the leprosy of uncleanness appeared on their lips.—Are not these persons prisoners of darkness, though blazing sconces pour artificial day through their rooms? Are not their souls immured in the most baleful shades, though the noontide sun is brightened by flaming on their gilded chariots?—They discern not that great and adorable Being, who fills the universe with his infinite and glorious presence, who is all eye to observe their actions,

all ear to examine their words. They know not the all-sufficient Redeemer, nor the unspeakable blessedness of his heavenly kingdom. They are groping for the prize of happiness, but will certainly grasp the thorn of anxiety. They are wantonly sporting on the brink of a precipice, and are every moment in danger of falling headlong into irretrievable ruin and endless despair.

They have forced me out, and are perhaps deriding me in my absence; are charging my reverence for the ever-present God, and my concern for the dignity of our rational nature, to the account of humour and singularity, to narrowness of thought or sourness of temper. Be it so, I will indulge no indignation against them. If any thing like it should arise, I will convert it into prayer.—"Pity them, O thou Father of Mercies! Show them the madness of their profaneness! Show them the baseness of their vile ribaldry! Let their dissolute rant be turned into silent sorrow and confusion, till they open their lips to adore thine insulted Majesty, and to implore thy gracious pardon; till they devote to thy service those social hours, and those superior faculties which they are now abusing,—to the dishonour of thy name, to the contamination of their own souls,—and (unless timely repentance intervene,) to their everlasting infamy and perdition."

I ride home amidst the gloomy void. All darkling and solitary; I can scarce discern my horse's head, and only guess out my blind road. No companion but danger, or perhaps, "destruction ready at my side."* But why do I fancy myself solitary? Is not the Father of lights, the God of my life, the great and everlasting friend always at my right hand? Because the day is excluded, is his Omnipresence vacated? though I have no earthly acquaintance near, to assist in case of a misfortune, or to beguile the time, and divert the uneasy suspicions by entertaining conferences; may I not lay

* Job xviii. 12.

my help upon the Almighty, and converse with God by humble supplication? For this exercise, no place is improper, no hour unseasonable, and no posture incommodious.—This is society, the best of society, even in solitude. This is a fund of delights, easily portable, and quite inexhaustible. A treasure this of unknown value; liable to no hazard from wrong or robbery, but perfectly secure to the lonely wanderer in the most darksome paths.

And why should I distress myself with apprehensions of peril? This access to God is not only an indefeasible privilege, but a kind of ambulatory garrison. Those who make known their requests unto God, and rely upon his protecting care, he gives his angels charge over their welfare. His angels are commissioned to escort them in their travelling; and to hold up their goings, that they dash not their foot against a stone.* Nay, he himself condescends to be their guardian, and "keeps all their bones, so that none of them is broken." Between these persons, and the most mischievous objects, a treaty of peace is concluded. The articles of this grand alliance, are recorded in the book of Revelation; and will, when it is for the real benefit of believers, assuredly be made good in the administration of Providence. In that day, saith the Lord, will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and they shall be in league with the stones of the field.† Though they fall headlong on the flints; even the flints fitted to fracture the skull, shall receive them as into the arms of friendship, and not offer to hurt whom the Lord is pleased to preserve.

May I then enjoy the presence of this gracious God, and darkness and light shall be both alike. Let him whisper peace to my conscience, and this dread silence shall be more charming than the voice of eloquence, or the strains of music. Let him reveal his ravishing

* Psal. xci. 11, 12. † Job v. 23. Hos. ii. 18.

perfections in my soul, and I shall not want the saffron beauties of the morn, the golden glories of noon, or the impurpled evening sky. I shall sigh only for those most desirable and distinguished realms, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines, and consequently—" there is* no night there."

How surprising are the alterations of nature! I left her, the preceding evening, plain and unadorned. But now a thick rhime has shed its hoary honours over all. It has shagged the fleeces of the sheep, and crisped the traveller's locks. The hedges are richly fringed; and all the ground is profusely powdered. The downward branches are tasseled with silver, and the upright are feathered with the plumy wave.

The fine are not always the valuable. The air, amidst all these gaudy decorations, is charged with chilling and unwholesome damps. The raw hazy influence spreads wide, sits deep, hangs heavy and oppressive on the springs of life. A listless langour clogs the animal functions; and the purple stream glides but faintly through its channels. In vain, the ruler of the day exerts his beaming powers; in vain he attempts to disperse this insurrection of vapours. The sullen malignant cloud refuses to depart. It envelops the world, and intercepts the prospect. I look abroad for the neighbouring village, I send my eye in quest of the rising turret, but am scarce able to discern the very next house. Where are the blue arches of heaven? Where is the radiant countenance of the sun? Where the boundless scenes of creation? Lost, lost are their beauties, quenched their glories. The thronged theatre of the universe seems an empty void, and all its elegant pictures an undistinguished blank.—Thus would it have been with our intellectual views, if the gospel had not come to our relief. We should have known neither our true good nor real evil. We had been a riddle to ourselves, the present state all confusion, and the

* Rev. xxi. 25.

future impenetrable darkness. But the Sun of Righteousness, arising with potent and triumphant beams, has dissipated the interposing cloud; has opened a prospect more beautiful than the blossoms of spring; more cheering than the treasures of autumn, and far more enlarged than the extent of the visible system: which, having led the eye of the mind through fields of grace, over rivers of righteousness, and hills crowned with knowledge, terminates at length in the heavens; sweetly losing itself in regions of infinite bliss, and endless glory.

As I walk along the fog, seems at some little distance to be almost solid gloom; such as would shut out every glimpse of light, and totally imprison me in obscurity. But when I approach, and enter it, I find myself agreeably mistaken, and the mist much thinner than it appeared.—Such is the case with regard to the sufferings of the present life; they are not, when experienced, so dreadful as a timorous imagination surmised. Such also is the case with reference to the gratifications of sense; they prove not, when enjoyed, so substantial as a sanguine expectation represented. In both instances we are graciously disappointed. The keen edge of the calamity is blunted, that it may not wound us with incurable anguish; the exquisite relish of the prosperity is palled, that it may not captivate our affections and enslave them to inferior delights.

Sometimes the face of things wears a more pleasing form; the very reverse of the foregoing. The sober evening advances to close the short-lived day. The firmament, clear and unsullied, puts on its brightest blue. The stars, in thronging multitudes, and with a peculiar brilliancy, glitter through the fair expanse. While the frost pours its subtle and penetrating influence all around. Sharp and intensely severe all the long night, the rigid æther continues its operations. When, late and slow, the morning opens her pale eye, in what a curious and amusing disguise is nature

dressed! The icicles, jagged and uneven, are pendent on the houses. A whitish film incrusts the windows, where mimic landscapes rise, and fancied figures swell. The fruitful fields are hardened to iron, the moistened meadows are congealed to marble; and both resound (an effect unknown before) with the peasant's hasty tread. The stream is arrested in its career, and its over-flowing surface chained to the banks. The fluid paths become a solid road; where the finny shoals were wont to rove, the sportive youth slide, or the rattling chariots roll.* And (what would seem to an inhabitant of the southern world as unaccountable as the deepest mysteries of our religion,) that very same breath of heaven, which cements the lakes into a crystal pavement, cleaves the oaks as it were, with invisible wedges; "breaks in pieces the northern iron and the steel;" even while it builds a bridge of icy rock over the seas.†

The air is all serenity. Refined by the nitrous particles, it affords the most distinct views and extensive prospects. The seeds of infection are killed, and the pestilence destroyed, even in embryo. So the cold of affliction tends to mortify our corruptions and subdue our vicious habits.—The crowding atmosphere constringes our bodies, and braces our nerves. The spirits are buoyant, and sally briskly on the execution of their office. In the summer-months, such an unclouded sky and so bright a sun would have melted us with heat and softened us into supineness. We should have been ready to throw our limbs under the spreading beech, and to lie at ease by the murmuring brook. But now, none loiters in his path; none is seen with folded arms. All is in motion; all is activity. Choice,

* Undaque jam tergo ferratos sustinet orbes,
Puppibus illa prius patulis, nunc hospita plaustris,
Æraque disiliunt vulgo.—*Virg.*

† Job. xxxviii. 30. The waters are hid, locked up from the cattle's lips, and secured from the fisher's net, as wells were wont to be closed with a ponderous and impenetrable stone. And not only lakes and rivers, but the surface of the great deep, with its restless and uncontrollable surges is taken captive וּתְלֻכַּד by the frost and bound in shining fetters.

prompted by the weather, supplies the spur of necessity. Thus the rugged school of misfortune often trains up the mind to a vigorous exertion of its faculties. The bleak climate of adversity often inspirits us with a manly resolution. When a soft and downy affluence, perhaps, would have relaxed all the generous springs of the soul, and have left it enervated with pleasure, or dissolved in indolence.

"Cold cometh out of the north." The winds, having swept those deserts of snow, arm themselves with millions of frozen particles, and make a fierce descent upon our isle. Under black and scowling clouds they drive, dreadfully whizzing, through the darkened air. They growl around our houses; assault our doors; and, eager for entrance, fasten on our windows. Walls can scarce restrain them, bars are unable to exclude them; through every cranny they force their way. Ice is on their wings; they scatter agues through the land; and winter, all winter rages as they go. Their breath is as a searing-iron* to the little verdure left in the plains. Vastly more pernicious to the tender plants than the sharpest knife, they kill their branches and wound the very root. Let not the corn venture to peep too freely from the entrenchment of the furrow; let not the fruit bearing blossoms dare to come abroad from their lodgments in the bark; lest these murderous blasts intercept and seize the unwary strangers, and destroy the hopes of the advancing year.

O, it is severely cold! Who is so hardy as not to shrink at this excessively pinching weather? See! every face is pale. Even the blooming cheeks contract a gelid hue; and the teeth hardly forbear chattering.—Ye that sit easy and joyous amidst your commodious apartments, solacing yourselves in the diffusive warmth of

* This, I suppose, is the meaning of that figurative expression used by the prophet Habakkuk; who, speaking of the Chaldeans invading Judæa, says—Their faces, or the incursions they make, shall sup up, shall swallow greedily, shall devour utterly, the inhabitants of the country and their valuable effects; as the keen, corroding blasts of the east-wind destroy every green thing in the field.—*Hab.* i. 9.

your fire, be mindful of your brethren in the cheerless tenement of poverty. Their shattered panes are open to the piercing winds; a tattered garment scarcely covers their shivering flesh; while a few faint and dying embers on the squalid hearth, rather mock their wishes than warm their limbs.—While the generous juices of Oporto sparkle in your glasses; or the streams beautifully tinged and deliciously flavoured with the Chinese leaf, smoke in the elegant porcelain; O remember, that many of your fellow-creatures, amidst all the rigour of these inclement skies, are emaciated with sickness, benumbed with age, and pining with hunger. Let "their loins bless you" for comfortable clothing. Restore them with medicine, regale them with food, and baffle the raging year. So may you never know any of their distresses but only by the hearing of the ear, the seeing of the eye, or the feeling of a tender commisseration!—Methinks the bitter blustering winds plead for the poor indigents. May they breathe pity into your breasts, while they blow hardships into their huts!—Observe those blue flames and ruddy coals in your chimney; quickened by the cold, they look more lively and glow more strongly. Silent, but seasonable admonition to the gay circle, that chat and smile around them! Thus, may your hearts at such a juncture of need, kindle into a peculiar benevolence! Detain not your superfluous piles of wood.—Let them hasten to the relief of the starving family. Bid them expire in many a willing blaze to mitigate the severity of the season, and cheer the bleak abodes of want,—so shall they ascend, mingled with thanksgiving to God and ardent prayers for your welfare,—ascend more grateful to heaven than columns of the most costly incense.

Now the winds cease. Having brought their load, they are dismissed from service. They have wafted an immense cargo of clouds which empty themselves in snow. At first, a few scattered shreds come wandering down the saddened sky. This slight skirmish is suc-

ceeded by a general onset.—The flakes, large and numerous, and thick wavering, descend. They dim the air, and hasten the approach of night. Through all the night, in softest silence, and with a continual flow, this fleecy shower falls. In the morning when we awake, what a surprising change appears!—Is this the same world? Here is no diversity of colour! I can hardly distinguish the trees from the hills on which they grow. Which are the meadows and which the plains? Where are the green pastures and where the fallow lands? All things lie blended in bright confusion. So bright, that it heightens the splendour of day, and even dazzles the organs of sight.—The lawn is not so fair as this snowy mantle which invests the fields; and even the lily, was the lily to appear, would look tarnished in its presence. I can think of but one thing, which excels or equals the glittering robe of winter. Is any person desirous to know my meaning? He may find it explained in that admirable hymn,* composed by the royal penitent. Is any desirous to possess this matchless ornament? He will find it offered to his acceptance in every page of the gospel.

See! (for the eye cannot satisfy itself without viewing again and again the curious, the delicate scene) See! how the hedges are habited like spotless vestals! The houses are roofed with uniformity and lustre. The meadows are covered with a carpet of the finest ermine.† The groves bow beneath the lovely burden; and all, all below, is one wide, immense shining waste of white.—By deep snows and heavy rains God sealeth up the hand of every man. And for this purpose, adds our sacred philosopher, that all men may know his

* Can any thing be whiter than snow? Yes, saith David; if God be pleased to wash me from my sins in the blood of Christ, I shall be even whiter than snow.—*Psal.* li. 7.

† This animal is milk-white. As for those black spots which we generally see in linings of ermine, they are added by the furrier in order to diversify the appearance, or heighten the beauty of the native colour.

work.* He confines them within their doors, and puts a stop to their secular business, that they may consider the things which belong to their spiritual welfare. That having a vacation from their ordinary employ, they may observe the works of his power, and become acquainted with the mysteries of his grace.

And worthy, worthy of all observation, are the works of the great Creator. They are prodigiously various, and perfectly amazing. How pliant and ductile is nature under his forming hand! At his command, the self-same substance assumes the most different shapes, and is transformed into an endless multiplicity of figures. If He ordains, the water is moulded into hail, and discharged upon the earth like a volley of shot; or, it is consolidated into ice, and defends the rivers, "as it were with a breast-plate." At the bare intimation of his will, the very same element is scattered in hoar-frost, like a sprinkling of the most attenuated ashes, or is spread over the surface of the ground in these couches of swelling and flaky down.

The snow, however it may carry the appearance of cold, affords a warm garment for the corn; screens it from nipping frosts, and cherisheth its infant growth. It will abide for a while to exert a protecting care, and exercise a fostering influence. Then, touched by the sun, or thawed by a softening gale, the furry vesture melts into genial moisture, sinks deep into the soil, and saturates its pores with the dissolving nitre; replenishing the glebe with those principles of vegetative life, which will open into the bloom of spring, and ripen into the fruits of autumn.—Beautiful emblem this, and comfortable representation of the divine word, both in the successful and advantageous issue of its operation! As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be,

* Job xxxvii. 7.

that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.*

Nature at length puts off her lucid veil: she drops it in a trickling thaw. The loosened snow rolls in sheets from the houses. Various openings spot the hills; which even while we look, become larger and more numerous. The trees rid themselves by degrees of the hoary incumbrance. Shook from the springing boughs, part falls heavy to the ground, part flies abroad in shining atoms. Our fields and gardens, lately buried beneath the drifted heaps, rise plain and distinct to view.—Since we see nature once again, has she no verdant traces, no beautiful features left? They are like real friends, very rare; and therefore the more particularly to be regarded, the more highly to be valued.—Here and there the holly hangs out her glowing berries, the laurustinus spreads her graceful tufts, and both under a covert of unfading foliage. The plain but hardy ivy clothes the decrepit crazy wall; nor shrinks from the friendly office, though the skies frown, and the storm roars. The laurel, firm, erect and bold, expands its leaf of vivid green. In spite of the united, the repeated attacks of wind, and rain, and frost, it preserves an undismayed lively look; and maintains its post, while withering millions fall around. Worthy, by vanquishing the rugged force of winter, worthy to adorn the triumphant conqueror's brow. Nor must I forget the bay tree, which scorns to be a mean pensioner on a few transient sunny gleams; or, with a servile obsequiousness to vary its appearance, in conformity to the changing seasons. By such indications of sterling worth, and staunch resolution, reading a lecture to the poet's genius, while it weaves the chaplet for his temples.—These, and a few other plants, clad with native verdure, retain their comely aspect in the bleakest climes, and in the coldest months.

* Isa. iv. 10, 11.

Such, and so durable are the accomplishments of a refined understanding and an amiable temper. The tawdry ornaments of dress which catch the unthinking vulgar, soon become insipid and despicable. The rubied lip and the rosy cheek fade. Even the sparkling wit,* as well as the sparkling eye, please but for a moment. But the virtuous mind has charms which survive the decay of every inferior embellishment; charms, which add to the fragrancy of the flower the permanency of the ever-green.

Such, likewise, is the happiness of the sincerely religious; like a tree, says the inspired moralist, "whose leaf shall not fall." He borrows not his peace from external circumstances, but has a fund within, and is "satisfied from himself."† Even though impoverished by calamitous accidents, he is rich in the possession of grace, and richer in the hope of glory. His joys are infinitely superior to, as well as nobly independent on the transitory glow of sensual delight, or the capricious favours of what the world calls fortune.

If the snow composes the light-armed troops of the sky; methinks the hail constitutes its heavy artillery.‡

* "How little does God esteem the things that men count great. The endowments of wit and eloquence that men admire in some, alas, how poor are they to Him! He respecteth not any who are wise in heart: they are nothing, and less than nothing in his eyes. Even wise men admire how little it is that men know. How small a matter lies under the sound of these popular wonders, a learned man, a great scholar, a great statesman. How much more doth the all-wise God meanly account of these? He often discovers, even to the world, their meanness. He befools them. So valour, or birth, or worldly greatness, these he gives, and gives as things he makes no great reckoning of, to such as shall never see his face; and calls to the inheritance of glory poor despised creatures, that are looked on as the off-scourings and refuse of the world."

—Thus says an excellent author who writes with the most amiable spirit of benevolence; with the most unaffected air of humility; and like the sacred originals from which he copies with a majestic simplicity of style; whose select works I may venture to recommend, not only as a treasure, but as a mine of genuine, sterling, evangelical piety. —See page 580, of *Archbishop Leighton's select Works*, the Edinburgh edition, octavo; which it is necessary to specify, because the London edition does not contain that part of his writings, which has supplied me with the preceeding quotation.

† Prov. xiv. 14.

‡ He casteth forth his ice like morsels. *Psal.* cxlvii. 17; which, in 'ern language, might be thus expressed: He poureth his hail like a

When driven by a vehement wind, with what dreadful impetuosity does that stony shower fall! how it rebounds from the frozen ground, and rattles on the resounding dome! It attenuates the rivers into smoke, or scourges them into foam. It crushes the infant flowers, cuts in pieces the gardener's early plants, and batters the feeble fortification of his glasses into shivers. It darts into the traveller's face; he turns with haste from the stroke, or feels on his cheek for the gushing blood. If he would retreat into the house, it follows him even thither; and, like a determined enemy that pushes the pursuit, dashes through the crackling panes.—But the fierce attack is quickly over. The clouds have soon spent their shafts, soon unstrung their bow. Happy for the inhabitants of the earth, that a sally so dreadfully furious should be so remarkably short! What else could endure the shock, or escape destruction?

But, behold a bow of no hostile intention! A bow painted in varigated colours on the disburdened cloud. How vast is the extent, how delicate the texture of that showery arch! It compasseth the heavens with a glorious circle, and teaches us to forget the horrors of the storm. Elegant its form, and rich its tincture; but more delightful its sacred significancy. While the violet and the rose blush in its beautiful aspect, the olive-branch smiles in its gracious import. It writes in radiant dyes what the angels sung in harmonious strains; "Peace on earth, and good will towards men." It is the stamp of insurance, for the continuance of seed-time and harvest; for the preservation and security of the visible world.* It is the comfortable token† of a better state, and a happier kingdom—a kingdom, where sin shall cease, and misery be abolished; but storms shall beat, and winter pierce no more; where holiness, happiness, and joy, like one unbounded spring, for ever, ever bloom.

volley of shot. The word בָּרָד inadequately translated *morsels*, alludes I think, to those fragments of the rock, or those smooth stones from the brook, which in the day of battle the warriors hurled from their slings. * Gen. ix. 12—16. † Rev. iv. 3.

A

TABLE OF THE TEXTS

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N. B. As Dr. Shaw, in the supplement to his excellent book of travels, and several other authors of the greatest eminence, have given an index of Scriptures, occasionally explained in their writings; I doubt not, but I shall oblige many of my readers by what I here suljoin, those especially whose taste is happily formed to relish the beauties of the sacred records.

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examination. The surface is cultivated to produce crops of nutritious plants—its rocks are used for buildings—its minerals are polished into ornaments—its earths are manufactured into useful fabrics, and its waters are applied as medicines, and form, in drinks and cleansing, one of the most useful necessaries of life. The archives of the globe contain a museum of the most wonderful science, and an amazing specimen of stupendous architecture. In order that this most sublime and very interesting subject may be accessible as possible to a number of enquirers, the work now introduced to public notice, has been devised on a new arrangement, that joins comprehension with simplicity, and unites the highest science with a practical plainness of communication. The introduction contains a notice of the theories of the earth—the rocks and earths are treated separately—the substances described are coloured from nature—the mineralogical character, and chemical quality are attached to every article that is described, and the agricultural character is added of the soils that overlie the rocky formations, when the contiguity is near and direct. These features have never before appeared in any geological work.

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